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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1992

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Mike Menduno and Captain Billy Deans examine dangers in the realm of technical diving. Karl Shreeves reviews scientific studies about the changes our bodies endure under water. Bret Gilliam traces the development of high performance cylinder valve manifolds. Wes Skiles recalls a brush with death, and Hillary Viders explains the use of emergency oxygen.



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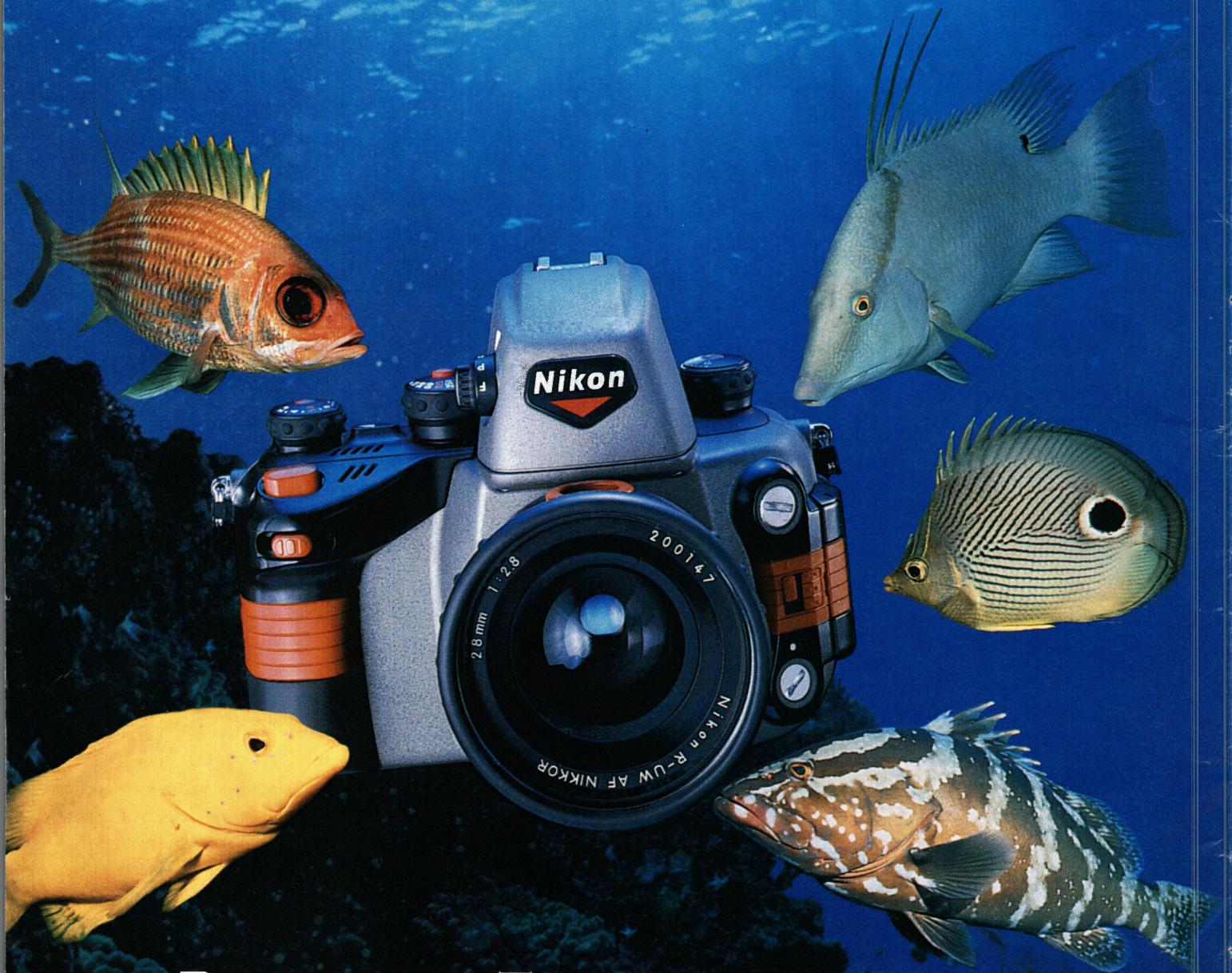
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Cover shot: David Fleetham was in Indonesia when this live *Nautilus pompilius* was raised from 600 to 60 feet. He shot 15 rolls before releasing it to return to its preferred depths.

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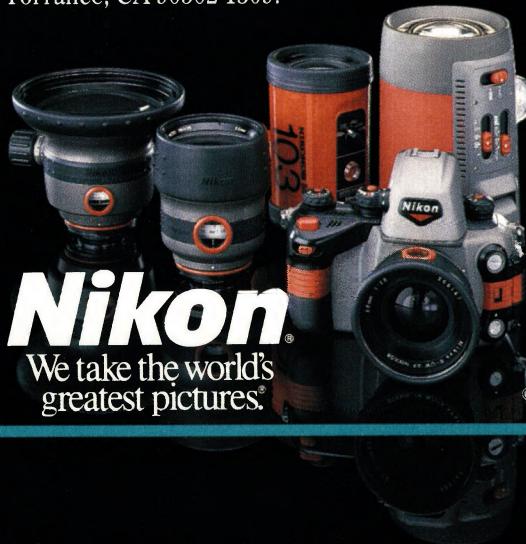
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FRED D. GARTH

In this issue we're delighted to cover the world's most popular dive area—the Florida Keys. Clear water, superbly expansive reefs, tropical fish, lobsters and warm weather are just a fraction of the draws to this continental paradise. Yet, over the years we've heard stories of reef damage, fish being depleted and general abuse to the area. Then in 1990 President Bush designated the entire string of islands, as the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS). Good move, right? Not necessarily.

Many locals are outraged at the folks in Washington dictating their water activities. Treasure salvors are stirred up to the point of indignation. Commercial fishermen are ticked off. And the general attitude towards what seemed like a good idea is one of dismay.

So where does that leave divers? Basically in the middle. While the FKNMS designation is controversial, and the environment is in delicate balance, many dive operators and dedicated divers should be commended for their efforts to preserve this natural resource. Don't get me wrong, there are still divers who will chop up a sponge and break off a chunk of elkhorn coral just so he can have a lobster on his dinner plate. However, operators are educating the millions of visitors who come to blow bubbles on the colorful reefs.

Unfortunately, no matter how much education is accomplished, the greatest threat comes from land-based pollution. Curtailing sewage, pesticides and other pollutants from Miami, the Everglades and the Keys themselves is the long-term solution. Diver impact is one thing. Basic water quality is another.

With all that being said, the Keys remain wildly popular and offer a great time in and out of the water. It can be like that for a long time if we divers do our part.

If you've already checked the Keys off of your places-to-dive list for this year, and you're trying to decide between the Pacific and Caribbean, we have just what you need—a handy ocean comparison. Nancy Sefton, who lived a stone's throw from Little Cayman's Bloody Bay Wall for years and now resides in Seattle where she can hit the Pacific quickly, gives us her comparison of the Caribbean and Pacific.

Finally, Greg Brown rounds out our destination pieces in Fiji, where tribal chieftains and fax machines live in harmony. The circle of 300 or so islands also has some of the world's top diving.

We appreciate the comments (both positive and negative) on our newest feature, the *Advanced Diving Journal (ADJ)*, which first appeared in our July/August '92 issue. Soon after it hit the streets, a number of shock waves rolled through our offices like the L.A. quake. Some complained that we were promoting unsafe diving, others applauded our efforts of reporting on this new trend of technical diving.

Just to set the record straight, *Scuba Times Magazine* is not trying to promote technical diving. Our role as a journalistic voice of diving is to report on the world of diving. We are dedicated to safe diving within your experience and certification level. Technical diving is dangerous and people die doing it as you'll read on page 12 of this issue's *ADJ*. Just as people die climbing Mount Everest, snow skiing off glaciers or hang gliding from mountain tops, divers can die when pushing the limits. Every sport has its extremists. Diving is no different. We hope that the *ADJ* will educate people to these facts and keep untrained and inexperienced divers from killing themselves and other divers.

On the happy side of all this, diving for the majority—that is recreational divers—continues to expand and improve. Dive insurance is becoming increasingly available. Daily improvements in dive equipment are nothing short of phenomenal. New dive resorts are opening all over the world (we just got a fax about a new resort on the island of Principe, off of West Africa). And the list of dive services grow by leaps and bounds. I guess the moral is that diving just keeps getting better and better. And if you love diving as much as I do, that's real good news.

That's it from here. Enjoy. ■



Photo by Mike Meegeleski

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Fred D. Garth

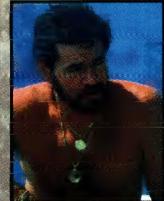
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"An Unexpected Twist" written by Marty Snyderman was simply outstanding! I can really relate to his love for wild things and wild places.

As a sportsman and adventurer, I have questioned our society's refusal to acknowledge that as humans we are hunters and predators. I feel that spearfishing and hunting are neither wrong nor cruel when held in the context of fair and legal take. Poaching, slaughter and waste in my mind are evil and we as "caretakers of this planet . . . have a responsibility to make sure we preserve the balance." Join me and thousands of other concerned individuals in supporting sound scientific wildlife management around the world!

*William P. Rhinehart
Riverside, CA*

Pen Pal

Thank you for the subscription to *Scuba Times Magazine*. It arrived just after we were locked down because of a mini-riot. It should make a fine gift subscription for a friend on the "outside" as soon as I save up about a month's

wages. Meanwhile I'll be circulating *Scuba Times* through this 1,500-man penitentiary to other potential subscribers. It's a well-rounded water-related publication.

J.M. Buckley

Leavenworth, KS

P.S. I'd rather be free-diving.

Talk about a diverse readership! We hope the upcoming Divesuit Issue (January/February) doesn't cause another riot.

Tight Fit

My article on the Aqua Woman Expedition in the July/August issue of *Scuba Times* was published with editorial cuts. It should be noted that for the last seven years, Aqua Woman has been organized by Karen Gurian of Massapequa, New York, and has been sponsored by The American Sport Divers Association. ASD's Founder and Director, Capt. Howard Klein, has been and continues to be a major asset to the Aqua Woman Expedition. Captain Klein generously donates his time, support, the use of his boat, the *Eagle's Nest*, and his

marvelous sense of humor. Also omitted from my story were the beautiful topside and underwater pictures taken by the Aqua Woman Expedition's official photographer, Pete Nawrocky.

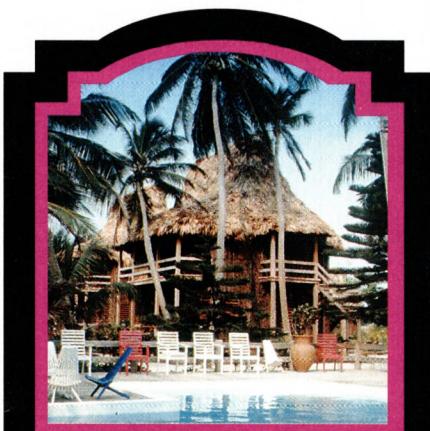
*Hillary Viders
Tenafly, NJ*

Unfortunately when space constraints force us to make cuts, we have to base decisions on what the reader would most want to know. In this case the accomplishments of the Aqua Woman project took priority over giving credit to some of the people who make it all possible.

True Brit

Just a short note in response to Wayne Tamereilli's letter in the May/June issue, in which he said that he did not agree with using BC's for out-of-air situations.

I must say that in Britain it is a standard part of our training that we are able to take a breath from our A.B.L.J., or Stab. We are trained to be able to make a slow buoyant ascent and breath normally. I do agree with Wayne's main statement that it's better to not have an out-of-air situation in the first place. An



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old but wise saying is "Plan your dive and dive your plan."

I enjoy reading your stories about the tropical dive sites, and one day I hope to dive some of them. But we in the north-east of England have some great dive sites, too. We are also a few hours' drive from Scotland, St. Abbs Eyemouth, Scapper Flow and Oban to name but a few great dive sites. We all love reading about Truk Lagoon, but we have a whole WWI German fleet scuttled at Scapper Flow. We in Britain would love to have more U.S. divers come and dive some of our dive sites.

*John Southern
Great Britain*

Some of our hardy New England or California divers may take you up on that invitation. As for the rest of us wimps, maybe we'll come if the dollar gets stronger, the water gets warmer and the beer gets colder.

Lost in translation?

In "Beneath the Ice," (March/April, 1992) there was a gross mistake in safety. It reads, "He found the caterpillar in 90

feet of crystal clear water even though his regulator froze, and he had to surface while holding his breath."

If Jean-Paul Mestre held his breath from 90 feet, his lung volume would expand approximately three times its volume at 90 feet. I feel that this print is an oversight by the writer and staff of *Scuba Times*. The most important rule in scuba diving is "breathe continuously, never hold your breath."

*Mark Diamante
Modesto, CA*

Correct, Mark. No one here can believe that one got through editing. Perhaps the meaning was lost in translation from writer Le Guen's native French. Either way, he no doubt exhaled slowly upon ascent as emergency ascent training teaches us.

Defense or offense?

The article entitled "Is Diver Training Too Soft?" (March/April, 1992) states that 15 years ago scuba classes tended to be rigorous both physically and academically, but, that now the classes are easier and briefer. It also implies that because the

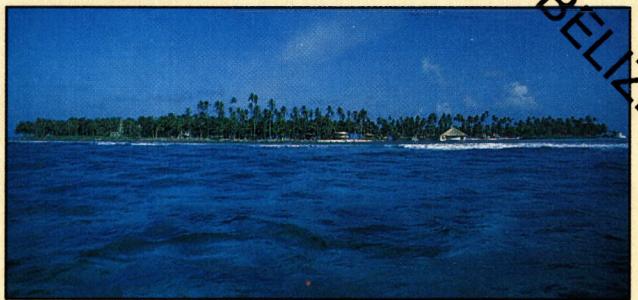
courses were academically demanding, eyebrows were raised if the student was elderly or female. Unfortunately, our society still makes derogatory statements regarding women and elderly people. These statements present a false picture. Intelligence, gender and age have nothing to do with one another. You have a responsibility to your readers to be sensitive to these kinds of misleading statements. In the future, don't let them slip by unnoticed.

Audryl McGuiness

Although we are always willing to accept responsibility when we goof (see previous letter), this time we stand by Karl Shreeves' statement as a comment on the macho mindset of divers 15 years ago, rather than on the intelligence of female and elderly students.

We welcome comments from our readers. Address correspondence to: Scuba Times, 14110 Perdido Key Drive, Suite 16, Pensacola, FL 32507. Not all letters can be published; those published may be edited for clarity and space

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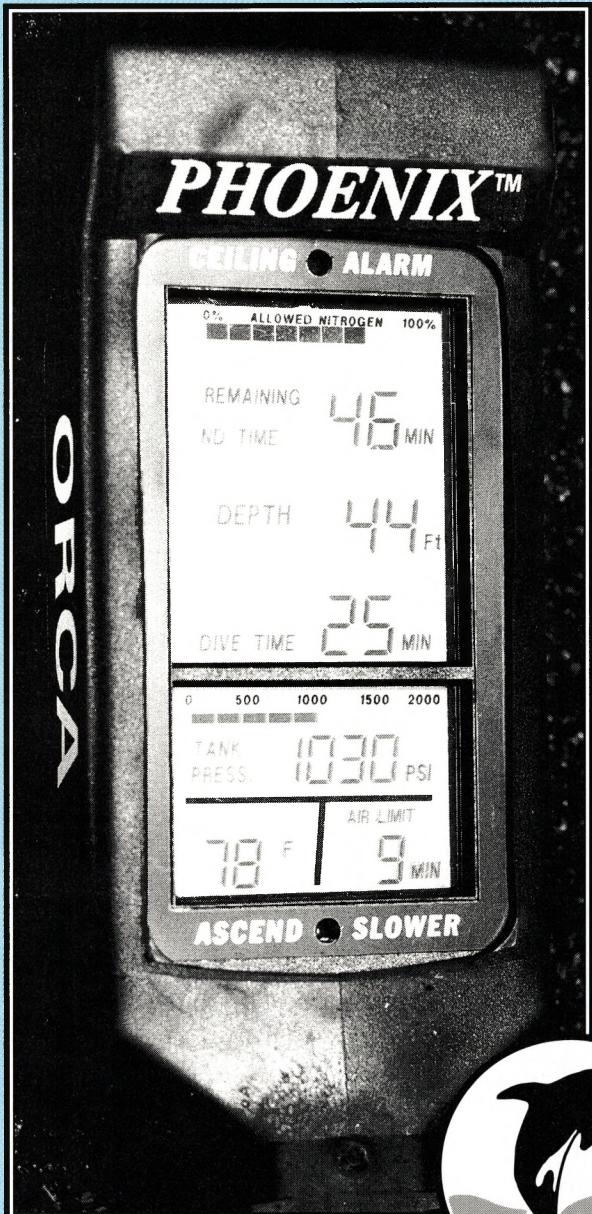
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Cover Photo: Cave divers set high standards for proper equipment and training to minimize risks. Photo by Wes Skiles.

Editors of Advanced Diving Journal: Bret Gilliam and Tom Mount

Can Diving Survive A Technical Revolution?

Editor's Note: During the month of July, 1992, there were at least three fatal diving accidents within the realm of technical diving. The reasons for the accidents are fairly clear—human error or an error in judgment. More importantly, these tragedies caused the technical community to look within itself and, perhaps, regroup.

Over the last few years a new class of diving has emerged from the closet that promises to extend the "self-contained" diving envelope beyond established recreational limits. Judging from the recent flurry of publicity on deep diving, solo, decompression, the use of enriched air (nitrox) and helium mixes, the technical diving "revolution" appears to have not only captured the interest of the industry but has become very fashionable as well.

New methods and technologies are becoming available to improve dive safety and to make deep and extended diving feasible with what is considered by many to be an acceptable degree of risk. However, these improvements come at the price of increased planning, operational complexity and expense. As a result, to date, these tools have been used successfully by only a small number of very experienced, highly trained divers representing the vanguard of the field. Now they are becoming available to the sport diving community at large, raising the question: "Are sport divers ready for this revolution?"

The recent alarming trend in dive accidents involving "technical-level exposures" leaves room for doubt. The three recent wreck diving deaths are cases in point.

In the first case, a diver wearing double overpressurized 72s "ran out of gas" while making a penetration dive on the *Andrea Doria* (240 fsw). His partner who entered the water with a "half-filled" set of steel 120s—insufficient gas to make the dive safely—survived. Both were breathing trimix, though apparently neither was trained in its use. The team was separated during a penetration in the wreck. When the surviving partner exited at 220 fsw with only several hundred psi remaining in his doubles and found his stage bottles clipped off near the anchor line, his partner was nowhere to be found. The body was later recovered. His tanks were empty.

A week later, an experienced deep wreck diver knowingly violated the NOAA oxygen limits while diving a New Jersey wreck on enriched air nitrox, suffered an oxygen seizure and drowned. The diver was breathing an EAN 40 (40% O₂, 60% N). This mix has a rated maximum operating depth or MOD of 85-100 fsw (a partial pressure of oxygen or PO₂ of 1.4-1.6 atm). However, the deck of

the wreck is at 110 fsw with a maximum depth of 135 fsw, resulting in a PO₂ of 1.7-2.0 atm which is well above the CNS (central nervous system) toxicity threshold. The diver apparently had told others in the past that he didn't follow the NOAA guidelines and didn't believe they applied to him. In at least one case the diver recommended that another follow his example. After all, diving air at 250 fsw is equivalent to a PO₂ of 1.8 atm—no problem! The problem is that CNS toxicity is a function of both PO₂ (depth) and time. His ran out. His body was found approximately 45-50 minutes into the dive with the regulator out of his mouth and 1,500 psi in his doubles. Maximum depth on his computer was 132 fsw. This time the limits applied.

Two weeks later another experienced diver drowned after getting separated from the mainline during a wreck penetration on the *Doria*, while the team worked as planned at two different places within the wreck. Though the trimix used to conduct the operation was a big safety factor, analysts on site believe the diver left the line to explore just a little further for more china before making his planned exit—contrary to the dive plan. He wasn't running a gap reel. (A gap reel is a hand-carried reel used to explore

"Safety is the key consideration in diving; it entirely controls depth capability."

Imbert, Ciesielski & Fructus Safe Deep Sea Diving Using Hydrogen

beyond a permanently attached line. Like many technical diving apparatus, it was developed by cave divers.) In addition his primary light failed, leaving only a single "dim" secondary light for exiting the silted wreck (cave diving and wreck penetration training dictates three lights minimum). This probably added to his confusion. Lost in the wreck, he ran out of gas and drowned before the team was able to locate him. His body was later recovered at 230 fsw. Though he was a well-trained police diver, he didn't have extensive wreck penetration experience and apparently had gotten slightly disoriented on a prior dive during the trip.

Accidents are a statistical reality in diving. Unfortunately in each of these cases, experienced divers violated one or more basic safety principles and died as a result. According to a recent study of diving accidents by Mano

and Shibayama published in the *Marine Technology Society Journal*, over 45 percent of the sport diving fatalities investigated were due to "lack of technique" and "reckless diving." Their conclusion is probably even more applicable to technical diving where there is little margin for error. With today's technologies and the accessibility of complex diving environments, it's easy for people to get in over their heads.

A real problem today is the fact that machismo is still alive and well in many communities. The cavalier attitudes exhibited by some divers and what has been termed "brass fever"—artifacts at any cost—are every bit as deadly. The result is that some individuals are encouraged to attempt dives that are beyond their experience level without first doing the work required to prepare themselves. Furthermore some individuals are knowingly pushing air and oxygen limits to dangerous levels ("It doesn't apply to me.") and running gas supplies to the limit.

If technical diving is to become an acceptable and reliable practice, then the prevailing attitudes must be underscored by the need to promote safety, not technical diving. This is both the responsibility of individual divers as well as the agencies and companies that support them. This has been successful in the cave community, which has been a model of education and responsibility in this regard. If divers want to extend the envelope, they should do it intelligently with caution and care. This means having the right attitude, training and practice; the appropriate equipment and support and building up their experience base slowly.

Ultimately every revolution has a cost. The real test for technical diving will depend on the diving community's ability to balance the requirement for safety with the human need to explore.

Michael Menduno is the publisher and editor of aquaCorps: The Journal For Technical Diving and technicalDiver newsletter. Cpt. Billy Deans is the president of Key West Diver, Inc. "Technical Diving Center," which offers training in deep and special mix diving.

1.Y.Man and M. Shibayama,
"Aspects of Recent Scuba Diving Accidents," Marine Technology Society Journal, Vol 23. Number 4, Dec. 1989.

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Evie Dudas

First Lady on the *Doria*

In 1964, Evelyn "Evie" Dudas took up scuba diving with less than an ideal motivation. She figured it would give her the inside shot in winning the attention of a boyfriend away from a non-diving competitor.

"I was 19 then, and he was an avid diver," she recalls. "He had another girlfriend who didn't dive, so I figured my ace in the hole was to learn all I could about the sport. My first dive was in Richland Quarry in Pennsylvania, and I was so hooked I dove in another quarry the same day. I continued diving all over and even visited Canada to dive the shipwrecks up there. I broke up with the boyfriend but had discovered a new calling: diving. I've been involved ever since."

Only three years after her first plunge into that dark quarry, she would become the first woman to ever dive the infamous 240-foot-deep wreck of the luxury liner *Andrea Doria* sunk in 1956 in a collision with another ship. Only a handful of men had ever visited the site by 1967. To gain

acceptance she had to overcome superstition and other obstacles placed in her way.

"In working up to the *Doria*, I dove all the serious New Jersey wrecks. On most of these dives, I was the only girl aboard. In the beginning there was a strong male chauvinist reaction to my presence. But after I proved I could keep up with all of them and outdive some of them, I was heartily accepted, especially by a guy named John Dudas."

John would be her partner on three historic dives to the *Doria*. A group of 12 divers and an all-male crew voted her a spot aboard the *Viking Starlight* for the expedition. A quarter of a century later, she can describe it as if it just happened.

"Captain Paul Forsberg headed the boat into three-foot seas on a cold June morning that summer in 1967. We had plans to anchor over the wreck for three days and two nights. It's about 110 miles from Montauk Point, Long Island and 60 miles due south of Nantucket. Late that same day, we zeroed in on the *Doria*, and our first team of divers

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attached the anchor line to the stern wing railing of the wreck.

"As I toppled from the warm, safe confines of the dive boat into the dark, icy Atlantic, neither storms, sharks, currents nor the bends were going to prevent me from fulfilling my *Doria* dream. I followed John down the line that terminated on the most magnificent wreck I had ever set eyes on. In the 50-foot visibility, the hull looked like an enormous freight train disappearing into the misty sea. Surprisingly, the whiteness of the upper decks gleamed brightly through the haze, sort of inviting us to explore them.

"My third dive on the last day was the most exciting. I was with John again, and he was after the binnacle cover to the ship's compass, still intact in the wheelhouse. He had spotted it the day before, and he rousted me out at six a.m. to go after the darn thing. The visibility was good but the water seemed colder, 40°F or less."

After descending, John occupied himself with the binnacle at 205 feet, while Evie salvaged some brass door



handles from the officers' duty lounge and chart room. The wreck site is plagued by changing currents, rapid weather switches and the hazards of ocean-going ships passing over the area. Suddenly she was overcome by apprehension and cold. An unknown voice told her it was time to go. She made her way out of the wreck's interior to rendezvous with John.

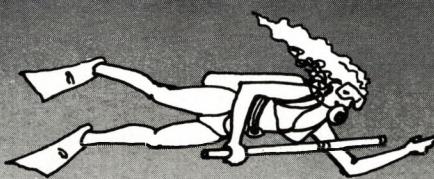
"I needed John, and I was ready to go," she said. "But he let his temper get the best of him, and he was trying to wrench the whole binnacle from its mooring. Somehow he regained his cool, gave the cover a twist and lifted it right off. There, beneath the cover, lay the compass that guided the 30,000-ton liner on a collision course with the *Stockholm*, 11 years earlier. This was the most prized artifact, and we thought other divers had salvaged it long before us. I watched as John ripped it from its mounting.

"The cross currents fiercely swayed the unruly anchor line as we held on for dear life throughout the decompression stops. Fifteen minutes after we boarded the *Viking Starlight*, the one-and-a-half-inch thick nylon line snapped. I guess my timing was perfect. We bade farewell to the *Andrea Doria* as storm warnings swept over her gravesite. We had our souvenirs, and I had fulfilled my dream."

John and Evie were married in 1970 and had four children, all active divers. Widowed in 1982, Evie remains totally immersed in diving as a dive store owner in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Her Dudas' Diving Duds is one of the premier pro facilities on the East Coast.

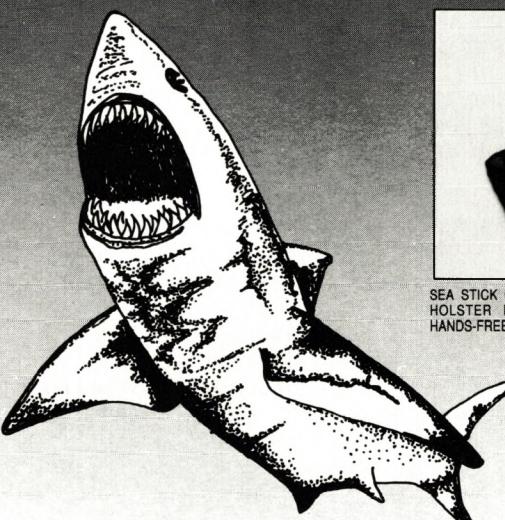
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Metabolic Meditations

The Exercise of Diving

Paceful," "relaxing," "weightless," say the scuba ads. It doesn't sound much more strenuous than watching grass grow. Of course, after only one or two dives, anyone realizes that diving requires physical exertion, and under some conditions, more than a little. This raises some questions: Is diving a "workout?" How does diving affect the human body's energy expenditure? How much physical effort does diving involve? If we define diving as "the total experience of diving," then the opportunities for significant exercise are greater than if we define diving as "swimming underwater."

Viewed as its "total experience," diving has the potential for a great deal of strenuous exercise, though much can be avoided by choice of diving scenario. For example, a shore dive with a long walk in full equipment from the car to the beach, a reasonable surface swim and then the reverse at the dive's end, will have most divers breathing hard and hearts pounding. This definitely qualifies as "exercise." Done on a regular and frequent basis, this type of diving could be expected to produce real aerobic fitness.

On the other hand, pre-dive efforts prior to a resort boat dive may be limited to standing up and taking four steps to the stern—not exactly what Richard Simmons would endorse. Since pre-dive and post-dive exercise might be viewed as various degrees of weight lifting, aerobic swimming, and backpack hiking, let's look at diving in its purest form—being underwater.

METABOLIC CHANGES UNDERWATER

It would be great if there existed a wide knowledge base regarding human metabolic changes during typical recreational dives. Likewise, it would be great if there were a tooth fairy; but neither exists. There are, however, limited studies of human metabolism during saturation dives, during cold water immersion, with and without exercise. While not a perfect match to all recreational diving, the findings contain lessons all divers should note.

Weight Loss Almost every study of human metabolism underwater found an immediate and notable weight loss in test subjects. During a saturation study in 1977, divers lost an average of eight pounds each in 10 days, despite a daily intake of 6000 calories—twice the average person's daily intake. The findings support a previous study at the University of Pennsylvania in 1971 which

found an average loss of nine pounds per diver during a similar period, despite a calorie intake that should have maintained diver weights.

Before you trade your Jenny Craig membership for a new BC, however, it appears weight loss in these studies was not due entirely to higher metabolism. It was primarily due to dehydration. Most saturation studies note an initial urination increase in test subjects, particularly when exposed to cold water; recreational divers tend to experience the same trend on a day of diving.

Why the body dehydrates while diving isn't completely



Above: Diving can be as rigorous or as relaxing as you choose to make it, but certain metabolic changes are predictable. The smart diver will know them and plan ahead. Photo by Fred Garth.

understood; moisture lost through perspiration and breathing dry air explain part of the phenomenon. Cold exposure also contributes, but some tests suggest that exposure to pressure alone (as in deep saturation diving) triggers increased urination. Whatever the causes, shed water and you'll chuck off weight, but only until you grab a bottle of fruit juice or water—something you should do regularly while diving because dehydration is thought to predispose you to decompression sickness.

Exposure to Cold Studies have shown repeatedly that exposure to cold (not just in diving) for extended periods tends to cause body responses such as releasing fat stores, possibly to provide metabolic fuel. In a U.S. Navy

B Y K A R L S H R E E V E S

study (Smith, Deuster, Ryan and Doubt, *Undersea Biomedical Research*, March 1990) 16 divers showed an average 40-percent increase in free fatty acids after five day saturation dives that involved exposure to 41-degree water while wearing dry suits.

The study authors suggest, based on subject blood samples, that as core temperature drops, the body releases stress hormones (primarily norepinephrine and epinephrine) that activate the body's fat stores. In addition, the research found a "small but significant" decrease in blood glucose levels. Other cold exposure studies show similar hormone increases; immersions in warm water have found no change in norepinephrine and epinephrine levels. The lesson for divers: Keep warm; the body exhibits physical stress responses when exposed to cold, even without overt symptoms of hypothermia.

Exertion Underwater While diving is relaxing in many ways, thanks partly to the "weightlessness" (neutral buoyancy), you exert yourself more during a dive than you may realize. One study of immersed exercise by the U.S. Navy (Doubt and Smith, *Undersea Biomedical Research*, March 1990) compared the effect of exercise out of water and exercise while submerged. Eight test divers had their heart rates monitored while riding an ergometer, a pedaled device that controlled the divers' work load at 50-, 70- and 90-watt energy-output levels.

Exercise underwater while wearing dry suits raised the heart rate significantly over the same exercise level performed on land. Given resistance caused by water density and by exposure suit restriction, this is hardly surprising. However, heart-rate increase to work-load increase was proportionately greater in water. When dry, the average subject heart rate was approximately 95 for 50 watts work load and 105 at 90 watts—about a 10 percent increase in heart rate to increase energy output 80 percent. When immersed, the average heart rate was approximately 110 at 50 watts and nearly 140 at 90 watts. In other words, the heart-rate increase was three times greater underwater than topside for the same energy-output increase.

The lesson for divers: working harder underwater takes disproportionately more exertion. For example, doubling your swimming speed will take four times the physical effort.

(Continued on page 18)

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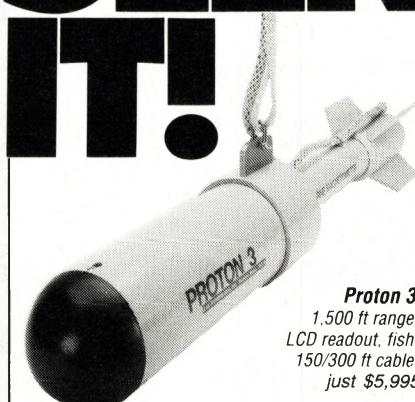
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(Continued from page 17)

Another concern regarding dehydration came out of the same tests. After several hours of immersion, the researchers found that subject heart rate tended to increase while maintaining the same work load. Measured oxygen consumption did not go up, indicating that only the heart, not the exercising leg muscles, was working harder. The probable cause was that dehydration had reduced plasma volume. To keep up with tissue oxygen demand, the heart had to circulate the reduced blood volume faster. The lesson for divers: Here's another reason to be sure you remain properly hydrated.

Your heart and limbs aren't the only muscles that may work harder while diving. Simply breathing is harder. With a fixed flow path (you can't reconfigure your respiratory system), gas density and flow speed determine gas flow energy i.e., breathing effort. Increase either density or flow speed and your diaphragm has to work harder to inspire the same volume. In short, the deeper you go and the harder you try to breathe (swimming against a current, for example), the more effort you spend taking each breath.

Complicating matters, as gas density increases, the maximum volume you can expire decreases. Since you can't inhale more than you can exhale, you not only have to work harder to breathe at depth, but you get less air in each breath. The lesson for divers: It's harder to breathe under water and your breath volumes will be smaller. Take it easy and don't get out of breath—you'll have more trouble "catching your breath" than when you're not diving.

Bottom line According to the existing evidence, even on a relaxing peaceful dive, your body is expending more energy than when lying on a relaxing, peaceful hammock. Add long surface swims or treks wearing gear, and it's clear that diving, while relaxing in many environments, is also physically strenuous. Unless you dive three or more times weekly, this means you'll want to keep fit through some other form of regular exercise, based on your physician's recommendations. You don't have to be an Olympic athlete to dive, but you should have good fitness and health. In addition you should plan and execute dives within your physical limits.

Karl Shreeves is PADI's manager of technical development and a contributing editor for Scuba Times Magazine.

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Q: What is DAN?

A: DAN is a non-profit organization dedicated to diving safety. DAN operates a 24 hour emergency medical hotline (919) 684-8111 and a 9-5 medical and safety information hotline (919) 684-2948 among other diving safety services.

DAN is supported by a membership association for safety conscious individuals and diving businesses. DAN is an advocate for divers on issues of safety in diving.

Q: What does Prepared Membership provide?

A: Divers Accident Insurance — covering up to \$30,000 of treatment for any water injury — worldwide.

Safe Diver Information Kit — containing DAN's *Underwater Diving Accident Manual*, wallet identification card and tank and equipment decals.

Alert Diver — DAN's bimonthly newsletter offers the latest information on education, dive safety, seminars and dive research trips.

Q: Why do I need divers insurance?

A: Few divers realize that the result of the bends or air embolism can be debts totaling thousands of dollars.

In many cases, a diver's insurance has not paid for chamber treatment. Air ambu-

lance companies have refused to transport a diver without cash up front.

The cost of hyperbaric chamber treatment varies greatly. Contrary to popular belief, most divers do not recover in a single treatment. The average length of treatment is approximately five days and the cost usually exceeds \$5,000.

The biggest single expense in a diving injury is for transportation. One diver had an air ambulance bill of \$10,000. This is not uncommon.

Lacking the ability to pay, a diver may be refused transport and may be refused treatment.

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Q: What does it cost?

A: DAN Membership dues are \$25, plus an additional \$20 for the \$15,000 insurance policy **or** an additional \$25 for the \$30,000 insurance policy.

Q: Who is eligible?

A: Recreational scuba divers, plus instructors, assistant instructors, and dive-masters (who are instructing or supervising diving activities) provided you are a resident of the U.S. or Canada and are a member of Divers Alert Network or join using this application.

Q: How much expense is covered?

A: The insurance will pay 95% of eligible expenses up to \$15,000 (or up to \$30,000 if you select that plan). This coverage is in excess of any other insurance coverage you may have. However, you need not have any other insurance to be covered by this program.

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Q: Are family memberships available?

A: Yes. Follow the directions on the enrollment form. Or call a DAN Account Service Representative TOLL FREE at 1-800-446-2671 for details.

Q: If I further questions, who should I contact?

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Back in the late 1960s, Dr. George Benjamin, Canadian cave diving pioneer, wrestled with ways to improve equipment used in long penetrations into the Bahamian blue holes that he was exploring. His teams were using standard double cylinders with a single regulator mounted on the manifold. In particular, he was concerned that a regulator could malfunction while deep in a cave passage, requiring a long buddy-breathing escape. Even worse was the nightmare of a regular o-ring blown at the manifold valve, allowing the sudden loss of air from the doubles.

He collaborated with research diver Ike Ikehara of the University of Miami and produced a unique "cross-over" air channel plumbed between two cylinder valves. This "Benjamin Conversion" was crudely produced but allowed a diver to mount two regulators and still be able to access the air in each cylinder. If a regulator should develop a problem, it could be isolated by shutting that valve supply off while the remaining air was shunted to the alternate regulator.

In 1989, Sherwood introduced a revolutionary design in valve engineering that goes well beyond Dr. Benjamin's vision. Known as the DIN Double Manifold, this valve system incorporates controls to both regulator o-ring malfunction scenarios and utilization of all remaining air/gas volumes in both cylinders. By employing the German DIN (Deutches Institut fuer Normung) "captured o-ring" method of regulator mounting (where the regulator first stage is actually screwed into the valve), the possibility of a high pressure o-ring distorting and blowing out are dramatically reduced. DIN is roughly equivalent to the U.S.'s Compressed Gas Association (CGA) and sets standards for a wide variety of valves, regulators and cylinders. In scuba applications, we are talking about the DIN No. 477 valve design that is rated for pressures up to 4351.2 psi or 300 bar.

A distinction must be made between 300 bar DIN and the lesser pressure 200 bar valves that are also available. There is a deliberate design incompatibility between these to prevent improper use.

The DIN Double Manifold does everything that the early cave divers wanted—in spades. By virtue of the DIN fittings, any reasonable expectation of regulator failure at the valve

is eliminated. If the center valve is closed, then the manifold will operate as two isolated cylinders. This means that there would have to be a completely separate regulator attached to each outlet. This gives the diver a very high level of redundancy. If the center valve is opened, the total air volume in each cylinder may be used by breathing on either regulator.

In the event of system failure, either side of the outlets may be independently shut off to isolate the malfunctioning regulator while still allowing the remaining air in the cylinder to be utilized. It's a well designed and engineered product that has become required equipment for most of the technical diving community and increasing numbers of serious advanced divers. It marks a major innovative leap in safety and contingency gas management.

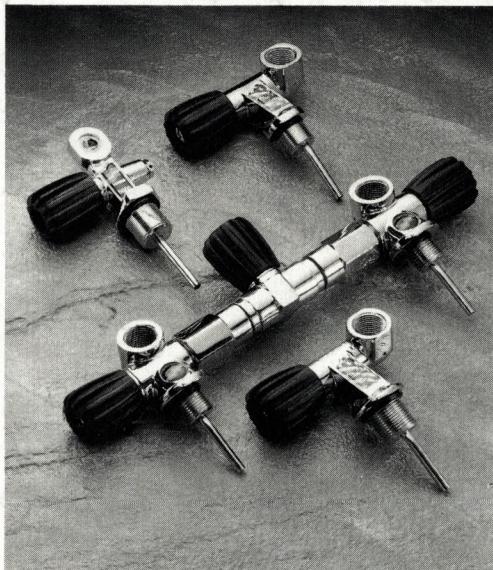
It's available with patented tactile-grip handwheels of oversized rubber or optional low-profile brass handwheels. Divers with standard cylinders may purchase the manifold in a 3/4-inch inlet version. Recommended retail is \$540.00.

Three years after Sherwood's introduction, two manifolds are being unveiled by other manufacturers. According to Beuchat's Robert Quintana, their modular system will be available in December and will include options for DIN or yoke mounting in 200 and 300 bar ratings

with cross-bars sized for 72-, 80- and 100-cubic foot cylinders. Isolation capability is built in, and the units are built with standard 3/4-inch threads, making them compatible with all U.S. cylinders. The modular system allows for conversion to single or double applications; prices are projected to range from \$375.00 to \$450.00.

Dick McNatt of Diver's Supply has been producing his custom manifolds under the name of Sea Elite since August. These also feature a modular design that can be purchased by component to create any number of cylinder packages with full isolation capability. This is of particular interest to divers who have struggled with limited options when three or more cylinders were needed to match the gas volumes to the dive operation. Like Beuchat, these are available in DIN/yoke, 200/300 bar with 3/4-inch threads and are priced from \$300.00 up.

For more information call Diver's Supply at (800) 999-3483 or Beuchat at (800) 248-0005. For information about Sherwood regulators write to 120 Church St. Dept. C, Lockport, NY 14094.



Sherwood's DIN Double Manifold with three single DIN valves and a regular valve.

Diving Into War

The quaint New England resort, Block Island, magically materializes each Memorial Day and disappears after Labor Day. Throughout the summer, Block Island is a magnet for scuba enthusiasts because of its abundance of shipwrecks. Many freighters, several submarines, an army tug and a tanker have foundered on the island's storm-battered bluffs or in surrounding waters. Because Block Island lies just twelve and half miles east of Montauk Point, Long Island, New York and fifteen miles from Judith Point, Rhode Island, the waters surrounding the island are an easy run for dive charter boats. It was aboard one such dive boat, the research vessel *Wahoo*, that my dive adventure began.

Professor Henry Keatts, a shipwreck historian, led the expedition to explore and photograph the *U-853*, a WWII submarine sunk in the waters off Block Island. An ABC Eyewitness News team, intrigued by the discovery that WWII naval combat had taken place only seven miles from America's coastline, joined us to document our dive journey for an Eyewitness News television feature.

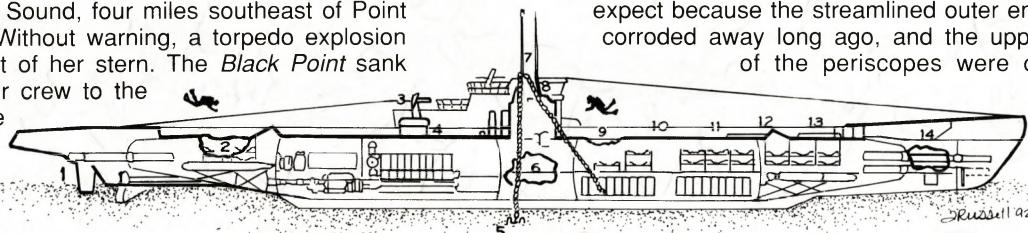
The *U-853* was a Nazi submarine, which was tracked and destroyed during its subversive mission in American waters. The type IXC U-boat was commissioned on June 25, 1943. On February 24, 1945, it headed across the Atlantic for the New England coast. The war in Europe was hurtling toward a close. On the night of May 4, Admiral Doenitz broadcasted the following order: "All U-boats . . . Attention all U-boats. Cease fire at once! Stop all hostile action against Allied shipping. Doenitz." There is no record that the *U-853* ever acknowledged receipt of that order.

During the afternoon of May 5, the *U-853* was cruising at periscope depth east of Block Island. The collier *Black Point*, a 5,353-ton coal carrier, was entering the western end of Rhode Island Sound, four miles southeast of Point Judith at 5:40 p.m. Without warning, a torpedo explosion blasted away 40 feet of her stern. The *Black Point* sank fast, taking 12 of her crew to the bottom with her. The U.S. destroyer *Atherton* located the *U-853* less than three hours



after the *Black Point*'s sinking. At 8:29 p.m., the attack began. But not until 10:45 the next morning was the U-boat declared "sunk and on the bottom." Practice attacks continued until 12:24 p.m. There were no survivors. Nine hours and 17 minutes after the last depth charge was dropped on the U-boat, German Chief-of-Staff General Jodl and Admiral Friedeburg, Doenitz's friend and personal representative, signed unconditional surrender papers at Reims, France.

One of the most popular dive sites in New England today, the U-boat lies seven miles due east of Block Island in about 130 feet of water, sitting upright on the sandy bottom. The pressure hull was originally enclosed by a thin steel envelope, designed to streamline the U-boat, but corrosive effects of years under the sea have stripped off most of the outer covering. All wooden decking is gone, exposing a mass of tangled gridwork and pipes. The conning tower is different from what one would expect because the streamlined outer envelope corroded away long ago, and the upper part of the periscopes were cut off.



1. Propellers were removed by divers	8. Conning tower hatch
2. 15-foot opening into aft torpedo room	9. Four-foot opening into commander's quarters and radio room allows easy access to the control room
3. Deck gun's barrel and flak shield were accidentally torn off in 1981	10. Circular hatch to the officers' quarters
4. Circular hatch	11. Square hatch into crew's quarters
5. Navy anchor in sand, with the chain draped over the conning tower	12. Forward torpedo room hatch
6. Opening in the outer hull	13. Air canister
7. Periscopes were sawed off by divers	14. Torpedo tube exposed through hull

Based on diagram from *Dive Into History U-boats* by Keatts and Farr

Only the conning tower's pressure hull and periscope stalks remain.

Several open deck hatches invite the curious to penetrate the *U-853*'s interior compartments. Because of the extensive damage caused by the navy's furious attack, there are several other places for divers to enter the hull. Forward of the conning tower, the pressure hull was

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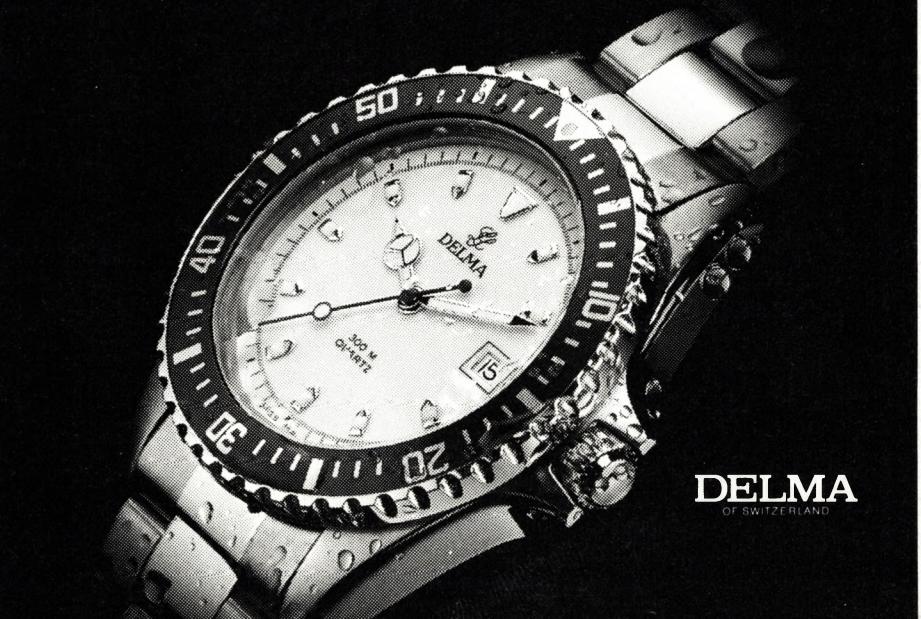
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blown open and a diver with a set of double air tanks can easily penetrate through the gaping hole. From that point the diver can pass through a circular hatch and enter the control room. Mounted on the stern of the *U-853* was a 37mm anti-aircraft gun, designed to fire 100 shells a minute. Unfortunately, the gun barrel and flak shield were torn off by a boat's mooring line.

The *U-853* is not a dive for the average scuba diver. Extreme caution is imperative when penetrating the close quarters of any submarine, particularly at this depth. Diving the *U-853* is for experienced wreck divers prepared for the complexities of limited bottom time, poor light penetration, extreme thermoclines, monofilament entanglement and the effects of breathing resistance and gas pressures.

The day we dove the *U-853*, the visibility was unusually good—close to 60 feet—and the U-boat was teeming with marine life. The hull, encrusted with jewel-like anemones, was spectacular. The conning tower, a panorama of bass, blackfish, ling and sea ravens, provided excellent photographic opportunities for both video and slides. One curious sea raven, mesmerized by my bright pink scuba mask, even posed eyeball to eyeball with me for close-up shots.

In contrast to its colorful outer structure, the *U-853*'s interior lies shrouded in eerie gloom as witness of the tragedy that befell her 45 years ago. The *U-853* still cloisters the skeletal remains of her crew and is recognized as a German war memorial. The nautical chart of Rhode Island Sound shows a circle seven miles east of Block Island labeled, "Danger. Unexploded depth charge, May 1945." That circle, cryptic monument to the last sea action between the United States and Nazi Germany, marks the tomb of the *U-853*.

Wreck diving is always an exciting adventure, but ships which were sunk in battle infuse wreck diving with an even greater dimension. Divers who familiarize themselves with the research provided by shipwreck historians like Keatts are not merely examining metal and wood beams, ribs, sheathing and fittings. As Keatts relates, "They are exploring a historic relic where men lived and laughed, drank and ate, fought and died." They are, in effect, diving into war.

Hillary Viders is an avid wreck diver, a NAUI instructor and recipient of the 1991 NAUI Award for Outstanding Service.

Emergency Oxygen: How Much is Enough?

Although emergency oxygen training and equipment have recently become available to the diving community, many people are still puzzled by the big question, "How much emergency oxygen should I bring with me on a dive?" Sport divers in remote locations with no on-site medical support, and dive leaders in charge of diving emergencies should have a definitive knowledge of how long a given supply of therapy oxygen will last. An adequate supply of 100-percent oxygen given immediately at the scene of a dive accident can make the difference between a complete recovery or a lifetime of paralysis. In some instances, oxygen has made the difference between life and death.

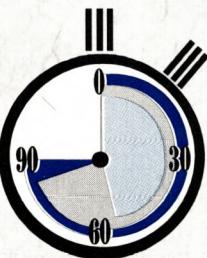
In the medical community, the "golden hour" describes the critical 60-minute period following a dive accident. The benefits of the emergency care given a victim in that precious envelope of time can never again be duplicated. A well-prepared dive rescue team, therefore, should be equipped with an adequate supply of 100-percent oxygen, capable of oxygenating an accident victim continuously from the recognition of the accident until medical authorities order it discontinued. A good rule of thumb for a rescue team is to have a demand delivery system and carry at least an hour's supply of oxygen for every 30 minutes transport time you plan to be from an emergency medical facility.

Many factors and variables determine how long a gas supply will last a patient, such as the patient's respiratory

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES INDICATE THE LENGTH OF TIME A PARTICULAR OXYGEN CYLINDER WILL LAST UNDER VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES.

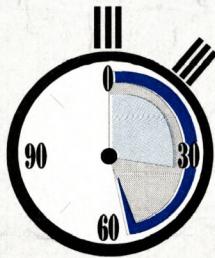
CIRCUMSTANCES:

A conscious patient breathing from a demand valve inhales .5 liters per breath, 15 times per minute for a total of 7.5 LPM. The oxygen will last 55, 84 or 90 minutes, depending on cylinder size.



CIRCUMSTANCES:

An unconscious patient ventilated with positive pressure via a demand valve and given an average of 1 liter per ventilation for a total of 12 LPM will use up the oxygen in 34, 53 or 56 minutes, depending on cylinder size.



rate, the patient's inspiratory volume, the volume of gas in the tank when oxygen delivery is begun and at what residual pressure the tank is replaced, etc. Allowing for these variables, the examples below show figures for gas consumption in the three aluminum cylinder sizes most frequently used in on-site treatment of dive accidents.

In the medical field, oxygen is measured in liters. The D cylinder is 14.6 cubic-feet in size and holds 413.2 liters. The 22.5-cubic-foot Jumbo D holds 636.8 liters. The 24.1-cubic-foot E holds 682 liters.

To appreciate these numbers, it is important to distinguish between a constant flow and demand system. Although there are several oxygen delivery systems used by medical professionals, only these two are practical for the lay rescuer. In a constant flow system oxygen is delivered continuously via a plastic supply tubing connected to either a light-weight nasal-oral mask such as a face mask, pocket mask or non-rebreather mask. In a demand system, a two-stage regulator delivers oxygen to a sturdier, tighter fitting oral-nasal mask only when it is needed for ventilations, in the same way your scuba regulator delivers air to your mouthpiece. The demand system is the least likely to waste oxygen or allow surrounding air to leak in and dilute the oxygen. Therefore, it is the only device which can realistically deliver close to 100-percent oxygen.

It should be noted that 10 liters per minute is only a starting point for victims being given oxygen with a constant flow system. Dive accident victims often need a flow



24.1 cf
E Cylinder



22.5 cf
Jumbo D



14.6 cf
D Cylinder

CIRCUMSTANCES:

A patient breathing from or being ventilated with constant flow equipment at a 10-LPM flow rate will use the oxygen in 41, 63 or 68 minutes, depending on the cylinder size.



CIRCUMSTANCES:

A patient breathing from or being ventilated with constant flow equipment at a 25-LPM flow rate will consume the oxygen in 16, 25 or 27 minutes, depending on cylinder size.

rate closer to 25 liters per minute. In several states, such as New Jersey, EMTs and paramedics are taught that if they have to use constant flow devices on victims of acute medical emergencies, they should always start with a flow rate of 25 LPM and work down if necessary. A look at the examples invokes the sobering reality that if demand style oxygen equipment is not available, and you must rely on constant flow equipment, a dive accident victim can empty the D cylinder in only 16 minutes. And remember—these numbers are based on the assumption that only one accident victim needs the oxygen.

While some modern, well-equipped dive boats carry large hospital size oxygen tanks which can hold up to 3,500 liters or many small cylinders, dive boats in remote vacation sites can be quite another story. When planning a dive trip to an unfamiliar area, it is advisable for divers (particularly dive leaders who will be in charge of a group) to call ahead of time and request specific information about the dive boat's first aid and oxygen equipment. If the equipment sounds inadequate, you may have to bring your own emergency equipment or consider booking a different dive operation.

All divers, particularly dive leaders, should have ongoing training in emergency oxygen. Some dive accident management programs include sections on emergency oxygen. There are also specific emergency oxygen training courses available, such as those offered by NAUI, DAN and Lifeguard Systems. Remember, you need to understand not only the why and how of administering oxygen, but also how much. Never skimp when it comes to safety. When in doubt, think of that "golden hour" and whether you can afford to squander one moment of it.

Note: The gas consumption rates in the examples were calculated using the exact cubic foot and liter specifications of the major U.S. cylinder manufacturers—Luxfer, Norris and Pressed Steel.

Hillary Viders, Ph.D. is a Scuba, CPR and Emergency Oxygen and Dive Accident Management Instructor for NAUI and the National Association of Search and Rescue. She is also an EMT, a member of the Undersea Hyperbaric and Medical Society and the National Association of Diving Medical Technicians, as well as a medical staff member of the IUC hyperbaric chamber in New York City.

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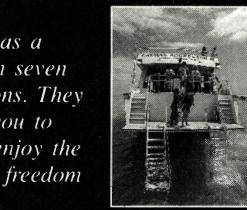
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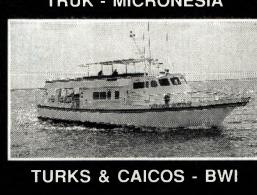
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Too Close For Comfort

Editor's note: The following article represents a turning point in the life of author Wes Skiles. Skiles, whose cave diving exploits have taken him around the world, has been the Training Chairman of the National Speleological Society Cave Diving Section since 1984. The adventures, or rather misadventures, outlined in this article illustrate an early cave dive by Skiles, which he was not trained to do. He was lucky enough to live to tell about it. However, it epitomizes the need for proper training when involved in any form of technical diving.

It was one of those warm, clear, sunny days at the Florida springs. I had a new friend who was certified, and I knew a great place to show him—a "really cool" cave with lots of "neat" passages. Mark liked the idea, so off we went. I had been cave diving before, so I thought I knew the rules: take a line on a reel, a couple of lights each, and save two thirds of your air to exit on.

After checking our gear and each other, we descended into the cave, reaching a high-flow restriction called the Tonsils. Penetrating the Tonsils was equivalent to swimming into an open fire hydrant. In one spot, the flow was strong enough to rip your mask off if you turned your head to the side. If you looked straight into the flow, the current would purge your regulator and cause a rapid air loss. Experience had taught me to tilt my head slightly downward and to pull along the bottom to pass through the cave's first natural blockage. Just beyond the Tonsils was the most inviting passage I can ever remember looking down. The bottom was hard limestone and free of silt. Beyond lay three different passages, each with their own shape and character. The convoluted walls held limitless shapes and textures that fed my imagination. The floor beyond this junction was colored with a deep orange. This orange color belongs to one of the finest silts on the planet. It is a clay that, when disturbed by an errant fin stroke, can rob a diver of more than just visibility.

Laying out a line from my crude line reel, Mark and I selected the middle tunnel. A hundred feet down this white, Gothic-like hallway we encountered a five-way intersection. The cave was becoming more of a maze. Checking our air, we decided to go a little further. Moving slowly, I continued to observe my buddy behind me. The visibility, although slightly disturbed, remained good between us. What I hadn't seen was how my buddy had been finning the bottom with no real concept of what was happening. Only when I signalled to turn the dive, did I realize the horror we were about to face.

The blackness that swallowed me was so overwhelming

Right: Although the cave system at Ginnie Springs has been sealed, divers can safely enjoy the caverns. Photo by Wes Skiles.

that I felt as if my life was draining from me. My initial thought was, "It's too late, I'm going to die." Other thoughts like, "They were right" and "This is how it happens" raced through my mind, and rightfully so. We had screwed up, bad.

When in shock or panic, the world you know ceases to exist. It is replaced by a slow-motion world, full of irrational actions. It isn't long before these actions are followed by a senseless flight at high speed into the unknown.

Even with my powerful dive light, I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. The desire to escape the situation was initially overpowering. After a few seconds, the full impact of our situation began to settle. I had to control all my functions, prioritize options and handle everything with absolute calm, if we were going to survive this. I didn't have any other options. I could, from that moment on, concentrate on finding my way out and making my air last, or I could lose it in a blind panic. It was an obvious choice,



but I had to get past the critical microsecond when that urge to panic hits full on. Either you jump on your brain with both feet, or you take off on a one-way ticket to hell.

I sat on the urge, and from that point felt like I had control of myself and the situation. Now, even if I did die in my attempt to exit this underwater nightmare, I would do so under control. The seconds, and then minutes, seemed an eternity as I slowly made my way out, inch by inch. I cursed the slow method I had developed to wind up the line, but I knew I must maintain the procedure.

The next series of events hit me like a freight train, and my newly found calmness slipped away. My buddy had become hopelessly entangled in the line. Cutting the line was out of the question; I had no knife, and even if I did, the possibility of losing the section of line that would lead us out was too great. If I could only see to untangle

B Y W E S S K I L E S

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the line from around his legs, we would be home free. After several attempts at untangling, I could sense he was losing control. He was lined up on the fight or flight runway, and he was ready to take off. Then somehow, the line freed itself and Mark took off. It wasn't over yet.

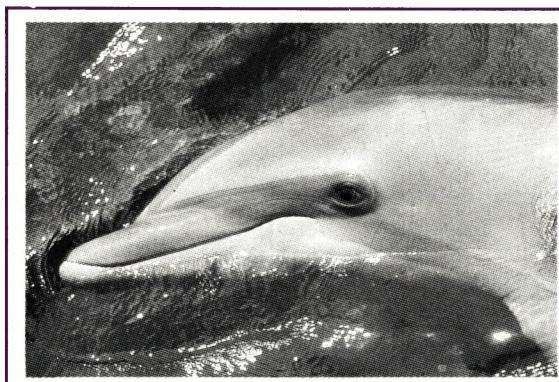
Since we had a line, the way out should have been clear. I say should have been, but because I had not gathered up all of the loose line, Mark was swimming blindly down the passage, tightly holding on to what was equivalent to a well-cooked noodle. Upon arriving at the five-way intersection, the water coming from three of the tunnels was crystal clear. To Mark it was a great relief to be out of the mind-numbing darkness. He was safe; the clear water represented salvation to him. He didn't understand that we would have to follow our silt path back to the surface. Without a thought, he ventured up one of the clear tunnels, still tightly gripping the line, which was now forming a giant "u" bend. I was at one end, the cave entrance at the other, and Mark was pulling the middle of the line down a dead-end passage.

Realizing what was happening, I jerked the line violently, hoping to jog his logic. It didn't happen. Time was running out. Our single tanks were rapidly running low on air. With our options running out, I abandoned the reel and began a strong hand-over-hand towards Mark. I had to get him turned around, or we would both die. Again, we were cast into blackness. When I caught him, I pushed him around 180 degrees and began to ride herd, forcing him to move towards the real exit as fast as we could in zero visibility. The visibility improved as we neared the Tonsils.

The last straw struck seconds later. I guess I knew it was coming, but was hoping it wouldn't. Mark had run out of air. He looked at me with total panic in his eyes and ripped the regulator out of my mouth before I could respond. Since I had no additional second stage, I would have to get him to share the air with me, or one of us was going to drown. It's cruel to say this, but I knew it wasn't going to be me. There was no way I was going to drown after all we had made it through. Keeping my cool, I let him have a few breaths before I grabbed the second stage in his mouth and gave it a gentle but firm tug. At first he held on, even resisted while he gulped another huge breath of our diminishing air supply. Then, as if he had regained

(Continued on page 26)

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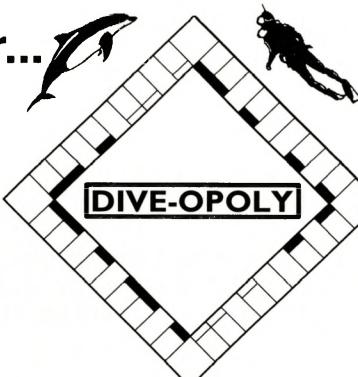
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(Continued from page 25)

self-control, he let loose of the second stage to let me have a much-needed series of breaths. From that point on, we defaulted to our basic scuba training and shared the remaining air all the way back to the sunlit safety of the surface.

Mark and I barely spoke of the incident afterward, and we never dove together again. The next day, nearly consumed with fear, I returned alone to Ginnie Springs to remove my abandoned line and reel. I traced the loose line on the floor all the way back to our fiasco without a problem. Picking up the clay-coated reel, I wound up the line and exited the cave. I'm glad I returned right away. During the swim out, I replayed the events of the previous day. I knew I had to change my gear, buddies and techniques. I also now desired formal training more than ever. If I was to continue this pursuit of exploring underwater caves, I couldn't afford to rewrite the rules, lesson by lesson. I simply would not survive them all.

Since that most memorable event, I went on to receive much-needed formal education in cave diving. I also continued to dive, explore and map the Ginnie Springs cave system. During a period between 1974 and 1976, 12 people drowned in Ginnie under circumstances similar to mine. One accident was a quadruple drowning, one of the worst diving tragedies ever recorded. In June, 1976, after assisting in two separate body recoveries, I helped a team of volunteers from the cave diving community permanently seal off the cave system of Ginnie. I still have mixed emotions about losing access to one of my favorite caves, but in the long run it has saved many lives.

Nineteen years later, I look back at my log and wonder why I was the lucky one. I know now the only way to dive safely in a cave is with the proper training and equipment. Even then, there are no guarantees.

Information about cavern or cave diving safety can be obtained from the National Speleological Society-Cave Diving Section at P.O. Box 950, Branford, FL, 32008. For training information contact the National Association for Cave Diving (NACD), at P.O. Box 14492, Gainesville, FL, 32604. Information can also be obtained by calling the author at (904) 454-3556.

Wes Skiles is a cave explorer and former cave diving instructor who now teaches underwater videography and photography.

OCTOBER

Monterey. All photographers are invited to enter the 12th Annual California Beach Dive Photo Competition in Monterey, Saturday and Sunday, October 17 and 18. At 8 a.m. Saturday each entrant will be given a roll of 36-exposure film and will have until 2 p.m. to shoot it during beach dives. That evening the entrants and guests will attend a banquet while the film is being processed. The judging and awards in all categories will take place Sunday. For more information call (415) 421-8111.

Cozumel. For the eighth consecutive year, divers from around the world will gather in October to celebrate the recreation that put Cozumel on the map. This year a toga contest is being added to the famous homemade bikini contest. The 8th Annual Splash promises more parties, prizes and discounts than ever during four weeks of frantic festivity and non-stop diving from October 3 through 31. For more information call Barbachano Tours at (800) 327-2254.

NOVEMBER

Bonaire. The first week of the month will be a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the arrival of Captain Don Stewart to the island. Parties, parades and musical events heralding Captain Don's contributions will be offered by the resorts, restaurants and dive operators. For information call (800) 826-6247.

Chattanooga. The Scuba Convention November 13 through 15 marks the 33rd year for YMCA scuba programs. It's a family affair hosted at the Radison Read House with plenty of activities planned for spouses and children of attendees. For more information call (404) 662-5172.

Ottawa. Buddy Up is the theme of the combined attraction of Scuba Celebration '92 and the Ottawa Ski Show on November 6 through 8 at the Sprung Pavilion in Lansdowne Park. For more information call (613) 235-9316.

Duluth. "Gales of November" will be held on November 14 and 15 to benefit

research and education at the Lake Superior Center. Shipwrecks in Lake Superior, ecological concerns of the Great Lakes and diving in Minnesota will be the topics of seven speakers at the Saturday program which concludes with an evening banquet. On Sunday a train trip along the north shore is scheduled with a narrator pointing out notable shipwrecks and divesites. Tickets are \$10. For more information call Innerspace Productions (218) 729-9028.

JANUARY

Orlando. "Tek '93, An Emerging Dive Technologies Conference" will be held January 18-19. Workshops will include topics such as decompression management, deep diving safety, closed-circuit breathing systems, full face masks and communication systems. For more information call (215) 579-2076.

Calendar items of interest to divers are being sought for future issues. Mail news items five months prior to the event to 14110 Perdido Key Drive, Suite 16, Pensacola, FL 32507.



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Out of Control

BY
MARTY SNYDERMAN

Needing something to jump start my creative engine, I headed for the Solomon Islands for 10 days of diving aboard the *Bilikiki*, where I was sure I would spend some magic moments with a manta ray, shark or dolphin. Day one, dive one, I realized I might have a little problem. We had beautiful weather and flat calm seas, but the visibility was low. I'm talking 30 feet. Somewhere into day three or four I realized that it was unlikely conditions were going to improve by any substantial degree. Happens everywhere at some time or another, and this trip it was happening to me. Low vis in a tropical paradise. Once again I faced the realization that you pay your money and make the best of it. No one controls the conditions.

I decided to concentrate on macro photography and let the wide angle work go until some future trip. I suppose if this sort of misfortune is going to occur, the Solomon Islands are not a bad place for it to happen. It is a macro paradise—biotic and exotic. Recognizing the diversity is fundamental to appreciating the flavor of diving in the Solomons. Nearly 600 species of corals can be found in the waters of the Solomons, compared to only 50 or so in the Caribbean. Everywhere I looked I saw something I wanted to photograph—colorful reef fishes flittering all about, a myriad of nudibranchs, crinoids, hard corals, soft corals and sea fans of every hue imaginable, tunicates and clownfish galore.

On the next to the last day of our trip we visited a village of about 100 people. I thought it might be a pleasant diversion, and my ears could use the break from diving, but I had no idea what a treat I was in for.

This village was in the middle of nowhere. We were greeted by an enthusiastic crowd the minute we set foot

off our dinghies. The poverty of the villagers was impossible to hide. I tried to imagine what they must think when they see a boat load of people who will spend more on their 10-day vacation than these people and their families will ever make in their lifetimes. But they had stopped their day and put their best foot forward.

A half dozen boys with painted bodies dressed in warrior costumes. They jumped us at the beach, feigning an attack on our group with spears and clubs, while the rest of the villagers howled with laughter.

Then their chief, a man named Raymond, gathered us together to greet us. The language of the Solomons is Pidgin English. Chief Raymond was no polished public speaker, but it was immediately obvious that his words came from his heart. He told us that he wanted to "sincerely and extremely welcome us,"



and that he was very proud of his village and very proud to have us as his guests. He hoped that "someday our very different people will better understand each other."

I wondered how long it had been since I heard such sincerity from a political leader in my country. Maybe I'm a little jaded, but the thought that Raymond was offering to serve us, rather than offering lip service seemed kind of novel to me.

The villagers invited us into their community to dance and sing for us. First the men performed, and then the women. They were all decked out in their traditional dress, and they performed for the sheer pleasure of it all. Perfectly choreographed? No. Joyous? Absolutely. I glanced around at the villagers and saw

ear-to-ear grins on many, especially the chocolate-skinned, blonde-haired boys who had mock attacked us on the beach. They had been a big hit, and they richly deserved their feelings of satisfaction. Their efforts were being duly acknowledged by the rest of their clan.

Raymond and his people had nothing to sell to tourists. His greeting and all of the entertainment were simply gestures of friendship. I couldn't help but shudder when I thought about how these people might be received if they showed up in my neighborhood. It made me ponder who has what to learn from whom.

Later that day as we headed down the lagoon to our next dive site, the crew spotted a salt water crocodile from the deck of the *Bilikiki*. We stopped the boat



and went out in the dinghies to take a closer look. Salt water crocodiles are on the brink of extinction, and chance encounters are rare indeed. Over the next hour we played hide and seek with the croc. The water was table flat, but still it was difficult to spot the crocodile when it surfaced. Only its nostrils and eyes broke the surface.

Salt water crocodiles have a reputation for being wary and aggressive. I have always placed them in a group with leopard seals and polar bears. The common link: if I see one, I get out of the water. But to spend an hour or so watching an endangered species—a cunning predator—in its natural habitat is an experience few ever get to enjoy. Dangerous as they might be, it is sad to

think that the last of the estimated 800 salt water crocodiles in the Solomon Islands will almost certainly perish before long.

The following evening, as we sailed into port, a crewman named Enoch and I sat up late into the night sharing our lives and thoughts. I learned that Enoch had never traveled out of the Solomons. He is the first person in his family to speak English. He hopes his daughter, Angelita, will be the first person in his family to go to college. Enoch worries about whether he will be able to afford to send her if she is accepted. He told me he is hoping for her to take his family to new heights.

I told Enoch that my father had been in the South Pacific during World War II, and he told me his father had spied on the Japanese, paddling his canoe through the night at great peril to tell the Americans what he knew. We saw a similar canoe being carved out of a great tree in Raymond's village.

Later our conversation turned toward the stars, and Enoch asked me if I thought there were other people living on some far away planet, a likelihood I have often wondered about a half a world away. It seemed strange, yet comforting, to realize how closely we were linked in history and in thought. Maybe something as simple as a trip to a village or a late-night conversation under the stars will indeed allow people from different cultures to better understand each other.

When you travel as much as I do,

Opposite page top: A trumpetfish makes himself scarce in a sea fan, proving you don't have to be big and bad to catch a photographer's eye.

Opposite page bottom: Fierce looks are but a farce as these Solomon Islanders greet visitors with a raucous dance.

Left: Like a gargoyle of the deep, a crocodile fish lounges on the ocean floor.

Bottom: A school of barracuda, gleaming tooth and mail, cruise the currents around the Solomon Islands in search of prey.

sometimes with jet lag, loss of sleep and long hours in the water, the days blend and memories blur. Sometimes I can't even recall basic details of my dives with sharks, whales and manta rays. But that won't happen with moments as compelling as the ones from my adventures in the Solomon Islands.

Okay, so this piece is not about my underwater adventures. But I never would have enjoyed my visit to the village or spent an afternoon watching a crocodile in the wild or talked to a Solomon Islander named Enoch whose father fought in a war with my father, if it wasn't for diving. The simple, yet gripping events of my trip reinforced in me that the adventure in diving isn't just the time spent under water. The whole aura around diving is an adventure. Diving takes us to unusual places and enables us to see life with insights that others may never enjoy.

Sure there are moments with great white sharks and humpback whales, and I am grateful for them. But diving is not something great to do only when the conditions are at their best. Diving is something we do over a lifetime. If we just go with life's current, odds are that even when conditions are not their best, there is still plenty in diving to enjoy. Thank God for that. ■

Residing in San Diego, Marty Snyderman is a contributing editor for Scuba Times Magazine.

Grave Mystery

Even for Cousteau divers, this is no ordinary dive. Their destination is an underwater cave whose entrance lies between 160 and 185 feet down and whose length is estimated to be 600 feet. In the dark stillness of its submarine passages lie the skeletal remains of four short-finned pilot whales. How did they get there? How old are they? Nobody knows, but Jean-Michel Cousteau is intrigued. It is to explore and film this cave with its macabre contents that he has dispatched a team to a remote island in Fiji. It will be the first time anyone has taken 35mm motion picture footage inside a cave that fewer than a dozen humans have seen.

Inside the cave's throat at a depth of about 110 feet, expedition leader Don Santee and chief cinematographer Michael Deloire encounter the first pilot whale skull. Embedded in sediment and heavily encrusted, it is distinguishable only by its shape. The rocky substrate has claimed it as its own.

Passing the first skull, the divers wonder how one of the ocean's larger creatures found this unlikely tomb. What may have lured it inside, and why did it stay? But they cannot dwell on the intrigue; there is more cave to explore, and every minute under water compounds the decompression time, delaying the return to the surface.

They follow the ascending incline, their lights revealing colonies of wriggling antennae along the limestone ledges—appendages of a fearless group of resident lobsters. At 90 feet, the divers make a left turn and see the second skull, not as encrusted as the first. Upside down and toothless, it faces the cave's entrance far below. Again the questions: How? Why? A small orange fish has taken up residence inside the skull—the living finding a habitat among the dead.

Getting to the last two skulls is trickier. Santee and Deloire know they must turn around, come back down 30 or 40 feet, turn right and then go up a narrow,

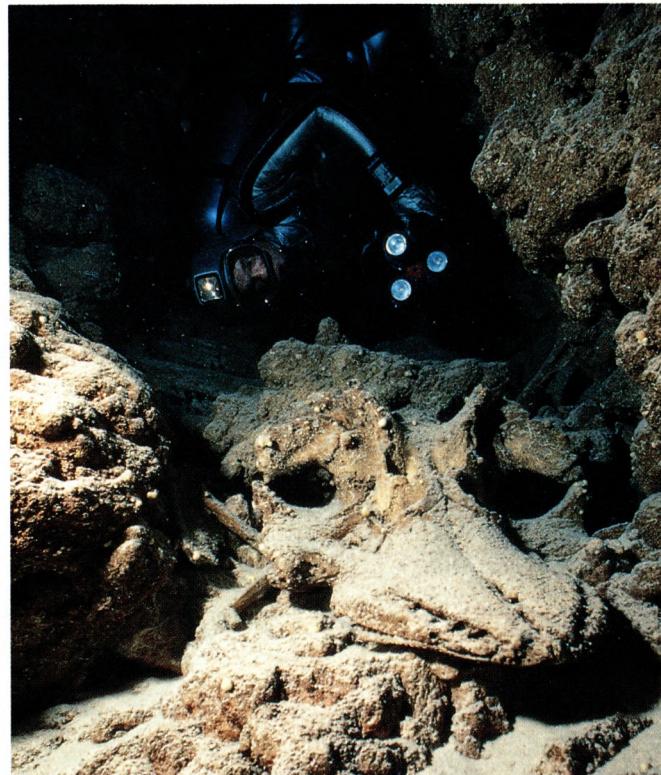
vertical chimney about 30 feet to reach the top chamber where the skulls rest. Unfamiliar with the cave, they start up one chimney only to discover it dead-ends. For an instant, they are stuck, dive tanks scraping the side; but they back out, retrace their steps and locate the chimney that gives access to the small chamber above. Santee notices cracks throughout the cave; rocks appear to have fallen from the ceiling onto the bones, evidence of geologic movement, and as the team would learn, earthquakes.

Two openings into the top chamber are discovered by Santee and Deloire. There they see the heads, stark white, smaller than the two below, and as smooth as boiled chicken bones. Like the first skull, these are also upside down, toothless and facing the entrance far below. The vertebrae next to one indicate a juvenile animal. Perhaps the pair were playfully exploring and found themselves inside the cave. It would have been natural for them to swim upwards, usually the direction to the surface and to air for marine mammals. But how they got up a chimney that is too narrow even for two divers is inexplicable.

Aboard *Alcyone*, Santee and Deloire share their observations with the rest of the team and begin planning the real work of filming. It is clear that the cave is not 600 feet long; measurements the next day confirm it is actually 215 feet long. Although still technically demanding, the dive will be less complex than they had anticipated.

For the next 12 days, the team makes one dive a day, staying inside the cave for 40 to 60 minutes, at times decompressing for more than two hours. There are four minutes of film in each of two cameras, making it possible to obtain a maximum of only eight minutes of film on each dive. Filming must be done on the first pass, for the slightest touch of a fin can stir the sediment.

One day, while hanging at the 10-foot



Marc Blessington hangs upside down in the narrow chimney leading to one of the pilot whale skulls, which is also upside down. Photo courtesy of The Cousteau Society.

level, diver Steve Arrington and Deloire hear a sound that they remember well from the underwater eruption at Kilauea Ridge in Hawaii. At this moment, inside the cave, Santee hears a "deadened thump," but he doesn't think of it as an earthquake. Later, on board *Alcyone*, the divers hear a radio report of a 3.6 earthquake in the area, and their imaginations play a "what if" game. What if the cave once had other openings? What if the animals were suddenly trapped inside by falling rocks triggered by an earthquake?

There are far more questions than answers to the mysteries of this cave. Like other unsolved mysteries, it will continue to spark the imagination. One cannot help returning to the unlikely juxtaposition of whales and corals. The reef, made by some of the sea's smallest animals, has claimed some of the largest, entombed together. ■

—Mary Batten with Stephen Arrington, Marc Blessington and Don Santee

Reprinted by permission of the Cousteau Society, Inc., © 1992

What to look for in a mask.

Whether you're a vacation snorkeler or a serious professional diver, your mask is the most important piece of equipment you'll ever own. The right fit—and the right mask—can make the difference between hours of frustration and hours of fun.

So take the time to try on several masks.

Put the mask over your nose and eyes and breathe in. When it stays in place with a perfect seal, you've found the right fit.

If you have lots of facial hair, you should look for a good crystal silicone skirt. The feathered edges on TUSA masks make for a particularly good fit.

If you have a small face, you may find a twin-lens mask, like the Liberator, fits best. If you need vision correction, this mask has snap-in lenses already made in your prescription.

If you don't like any water in your mask, you should try the new Hyperdry mask, with a

hands-free purge valve to clear it any time.

Serious divers may look for the increased peripheral vision found in a Hyperform mask.

Every diver should look for a comfortable fit—and the new swivels on TUSA masks make them easy to adjust to any size or preference.

And fins.

There's only one reason to use any fin—and that's increased power with the least effort. Most dive shops recommend a flexible fin, like the new Hyperform. Layered construction and the best materials make this a fin that can stand up to all kinds of conditions and last for years.

Check that straps and buckles are easy to slip into, easy to



release, and easy on your ankles. Then don't forget to match the colors to the rest of your gear.

And snorkels.

Of course, every snorkeler wants air, not water, so you should look for the driest system available. The Hyperdry snorkel has a double valve for easy, automatic clearing.

Then check that the mouthpiece fits comfortably with the snorkel at the most comfortable angle. Hyperdry and

Hyperform snorkels both have a choice of mouthpieces and a swivel to adjust to your face and style.

Actually, fitting all your diving gear is a fairly simple process. Start at a good dive shop, take your time, and ask for TUSA.

TUSA

DIVERSIONS

LES SCUBERABLES

It's 9:40 p.m. at the Imperial theatre on Broadway where a production of *Les Misérables* has just come to intermission. My dive buddy, Dann Fink, is fresh from his first trip to Grand Cayman, and a few of us gather around to look at his pictures. The stage manager calls, "Five minutes to places," for the top of the second act. Another impromptu meeting of Les Scubéables comes to an end.

People who love to dive will form groups just about anywhere, so it should not be odd that a small sect of us thrive in the cement sea of New York on the Great White Way.

Les Scubéables was formed in July 1990 in San Francisco after a group of us from the show became certified through the Bamboo Reef Dive Shop. Our instructor was Tom Stone, a man so full of joy and love for the sea that he made some of us want to know more.

Our open water dives were held in Whaler's Cove at the Point Lobos National Marine Sanctuary in Monterey. The cold, spectacular reality of the kelp forest quickly separated those who would from those who would not be returning to the sea. Dann and I went on to advanced PADI training and logged many memorable stories before the San Francisco company of the show closed in February 1991. I went on to new adventures, and the group seemed reduced to nothing more than a T-shirt and some memories.

As fate would have it, I moved to New York City and made my Broadway debut as Montparnasse in *Les Misérables*. Imagine my surprise to find that Dann had joined the company prior to my arrival. With our combined enthusiasm, Les Scubéables was reborn. We are planning a trip in March to Truk Lagoon and Palau. Tom Stone, our instructor and friend, will be joining us. In the meantime, we wait for the Atlantic to warm up so we can explore the wrecks off Long Island.

As an actor, I explore the vastness of the human condition. As a diver, I explore a world of infinite beauty. I'm not sure which one I love more. At times I'm not sure which world I belong to: the stage or the sea.

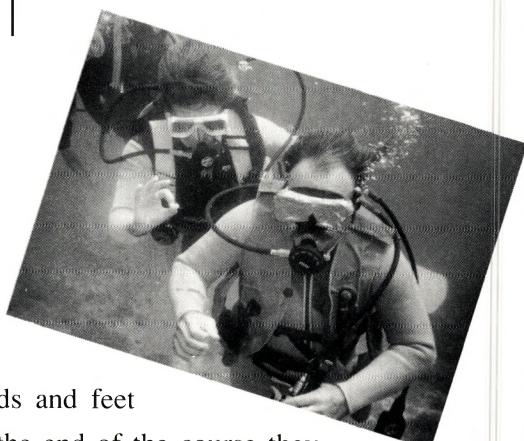
—Liam O'Brien



Les Scubéables

LOOK IT UP

If you've been looking for a copy of the 1948 postcard with the caption, "Prof. Piccard Prepares to Plunge" or a 1966 issue of *Popular Mechanics* that ran a story titled "Scuba Diving Fire Eaters," you're in luck. They are both listed in the second edition of *The Diver's and Water-sportman's Library* by David Way of Devon, England. Books, magazines, greeting cards, cigarette cards, virtually anything that has survived from the early days of dive publishing can be found in its pages. Pencil sketches and a handwritten addendum of items listed too late for the printer give the catalogue a homegrown look. Readers are invited to send the publisher their "want lists" as well as items they would like to sell, so that the catalogue will eventually become a resource for collectors of early dive history. Send inquiries to 10 Cedar Road; Preston, Paignton; Devon, TQ3 2DD, England, or call (0803) 551840. ■

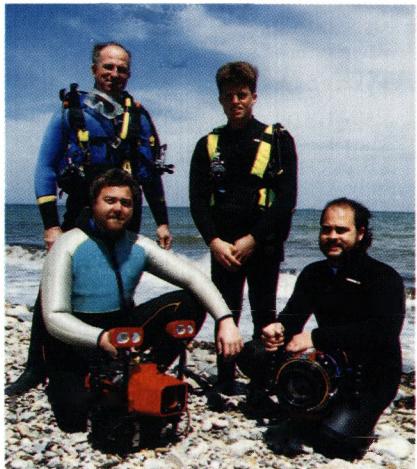


COURSE WITH A CAUSE

Imagine experiencing the cool depths of the ocean minus the use of your arms, legs and sight. Five scuba instructors did just that recently when they took the Handicapped Scuba Association (HSA) Instructor Training Course with Red Sail Sports in Aruba. They wore masks covered with duct tape to simulate blindness. They dove with their hands and feet bound to understand the obstacles a paraplegic or quadriplegic faces. At the end of the course they were certified by HSA to introduce disabled students to the joys of diving.

The Handicapped Scuba Association has been educating the scuba diving industry and people with disabilities since 1975. In their unique classes, physically challenged and able-bodied students receive training together. Red Sail Sports now offers open water certification for disabled students at their Grand Cayman and Aruba facilities. For more information call (800) 255-6425. ■

DIVERSIONS



DIVERS DOWN CORNER

Living vicariously through the wonders of television has become a way of life to a generation who grew up cooking with Julia, exercising with Lila and spying on the intimate rituals of wildlife with Marlin. Since 1986, approximately 60 million viewers have been diving with Mark. No muss, no fuss, no water in your ears—just tune in to one of five cable sports networks to dive the reefs, wrecks and rockpiles of famous and little-known destinations.

Divers Down is the venture of Mark Stanton who also hosts the 30-minute weekly series. In the first 85 episodes viewers have "dove" with Stanton from Nova Scotia to the Bahamas and as far west as Arizona. Having recently been accepted for airing on networks covering the Pacific states, the show is now exploring California dive sites.

Within the episodes, the audience may be treated to a visit from Mr. Gadget (Bill Walker) with diving tips, product reviews or safety information. Herb Segars hosts another segment called Snapshot where he assists viewers in developing their own photo techniques. The Topsider Explorer portion takes the viewers on a five-minute spin to the local resorts, restaurants, nature sights and cultural attractions.

Nine more networks have agreed to air the series, closing in on Stanton's goal to eventually find a spot on all of the regional sports networks. Spurred by the success, Stanton has expanded its Come-Along Travel Program. Divers and non-divers can purchase a spot on the crew for a week of taping. They serve as talent extras in underwater and topside scenes complete with their names listed in the credits of that episode. A VHS copy of the telecast is sent to each Come-Along guest.

Providing realistic accounts of scuba diving is still the main attraction of the show, with dive action on board the vessel or beneath the surface providing a major portion of each episode. If you want to keep up with *Divers Down*, you can get a free newsletter by writing to *Divers Down Newsletter*, P.O. Box 288, Halifax, MA 02338. ■

PLAN LOSES TEETH

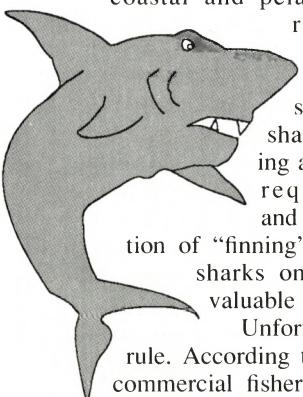
The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has released the proposed rule for managing sharks in the Atlantic Ocean, which would regulate shark fishing in federal waters of the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea.

The plan groups 39 shark species into three management categories: small coastal, large coastal and pelagic sharks. Proposed management measures include annual commercial quotas for large coastal and pelagic sharks,

recreational bag limits, a minimum size for mako sharks, permitting and reporting requirements, and the prohibition of "finning" (harvesting sharks only for their valuable fins and returning the disabled animals to the sea).

Unfortunately, a major management measure which was part of the plan is missing in the recent proposed rule. According to NMFS, catches in the large coastal category have exceeded resource production since 1987, and a commercial fishery closure was deemed necessary to stop overfishing and begin the rebuilding program. The plan's second draft scheduled such a closure from October 1991 until July 1992. Delays upset this schedule and the "necessary" measure was quietly omitted from the recent rule.

The large coastal category contains the Atlantic's rarest sharks: whale, white and basking. Other large coastal sharks include the principal species taken in the directed shark fishery such as blacktip, tiger, bull, nurse, lemon and hammerhead. ■



Networks Currently Airing *Divers Down*

New England Sports Network	Saturday —9:30 a.m., Monday—6:00 p.m. and Wednesday —12:30 p.m.
Arizona Sports Program Network	Sunday—8:30 a.m.
Pro Am Sports System	Sunday—10:00 p.m.
Madison Square Garden Network	Variable schedule in prime time spots
Resort Sports Network	Twice weekly on affiliate stations between 4 p.m. and 11 p.m.

Networks That Have Accepted *Divers Down* for Upcoming Seasons

Home Team Sports	Mid-Atlantic states
Florida Sunshine Network	Florida
Prime Ticket	Southern California, Hawaii, Nevada, Arizona
Prime Sports Northwest	Oregon, Washington, Idaho
Prime Sports Network Upper Midwest	Iowa, W. Wisconsin, Minnesota, S & N Dakota
Prime Sports Network Midwest	Indiana, SW Ohio, Kentucky, S. Illinois
Prime Sports Network Inter-Mountain West	W. Montana, S. Idaho, Utah, W. Wyoming, NE Nevada
Prime Sports Network Rocky Mountain	N. New Mexico, Colorado, E. Wyoming, E. Montana, Nebraska, Kansas
KBL Network	N. Ohio, W. Pennsylvania, W. Virginia

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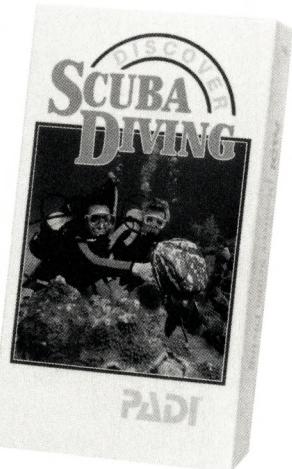
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DIVERSEIONS

PADI ON THE MOVE

PADI has been making news throughout this year with new dive products and services covering every area from fashions to insurance. This time it's a new video, *Discover Scuba Diving*. Designed to introduce non-divers to the sport, the 25-minute program features spectacular underwater footage shot in Grand Cayman and the United States. The video is available through more than 1,800 PADI dive centers and resorts around the world.

Speaking of the world, the PADI Travel Network has added 21 new destinations to its roster of dive-oriented resorts in the Caribbean for a total of more than 130 resorts or live-aboard vacation options worldwide. They are all described in detail in the newly revised resort guide, *Dive Traveler-Caribbean* and *The Exotic World of Diving*. For free copies of these two publications stop by any PADI dive center. For a free list of PADI dive centers write PADI at 1251 E. Dyer Rd. #100, Santa Ana, CA 92705-5605. ☐



RESORT NEWS

The choice is yours at Bob Soto's Diving in Grand Cayman. Two new programs cover divers from novice to advanced levels. The Gold Card Program gives divers the freedom to explore the reefs at their own leisure and avoid follow-the-leader syndrome. It is required that each buddy team have a computer and adhere to a depth limit of 100 feet. They must also exhibit good buoyancy, navigational skills and air consumption. The Double-Shallow Program is designed to give divers extra bottom time on two medium-shallow dives (guided or unguided). This program is recommended for either novices or photographers. For more information call (800) BOB-SOTO.

Marathon Undersea Adventures is the newest dive resort in the chain of Neal Watson's affiliates. Located at Buccaneer Resort on Marathon Key, it offers 50 cottages and 26 villas complete with beach, tennis courts, fresh water swimming pool, restaurant and bar overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. The dive shop and boats are located on the premises for convenient equipment rental, instructions and air fills. For more information call (800) 327-8150.

Turneffe Island Lodge in Belize has expanded with four new cabanas, now giving the resort a 24-guest capacity. In addition, they have added a 48-foot custom-designed, high-speed dive boat. *Bodacious* will make quick work of island transfers and reaching those remote, pristine dive sites that abound off the coast of Belize. For more information call (800) 338-8149. ☐

(For more Diversions turn to page 80)



From the first moment you enter the crystal clear waters of The Cayman Islands, you'll be surrounded by excitement.



The skies smiled down on us. The sunlit waters merrily beckoned. And we entered the calmest turquoise waters we'd ever seen.

As in a child's storybook, the fish glided forth to welcome us.

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CAYMAN ISLANDS

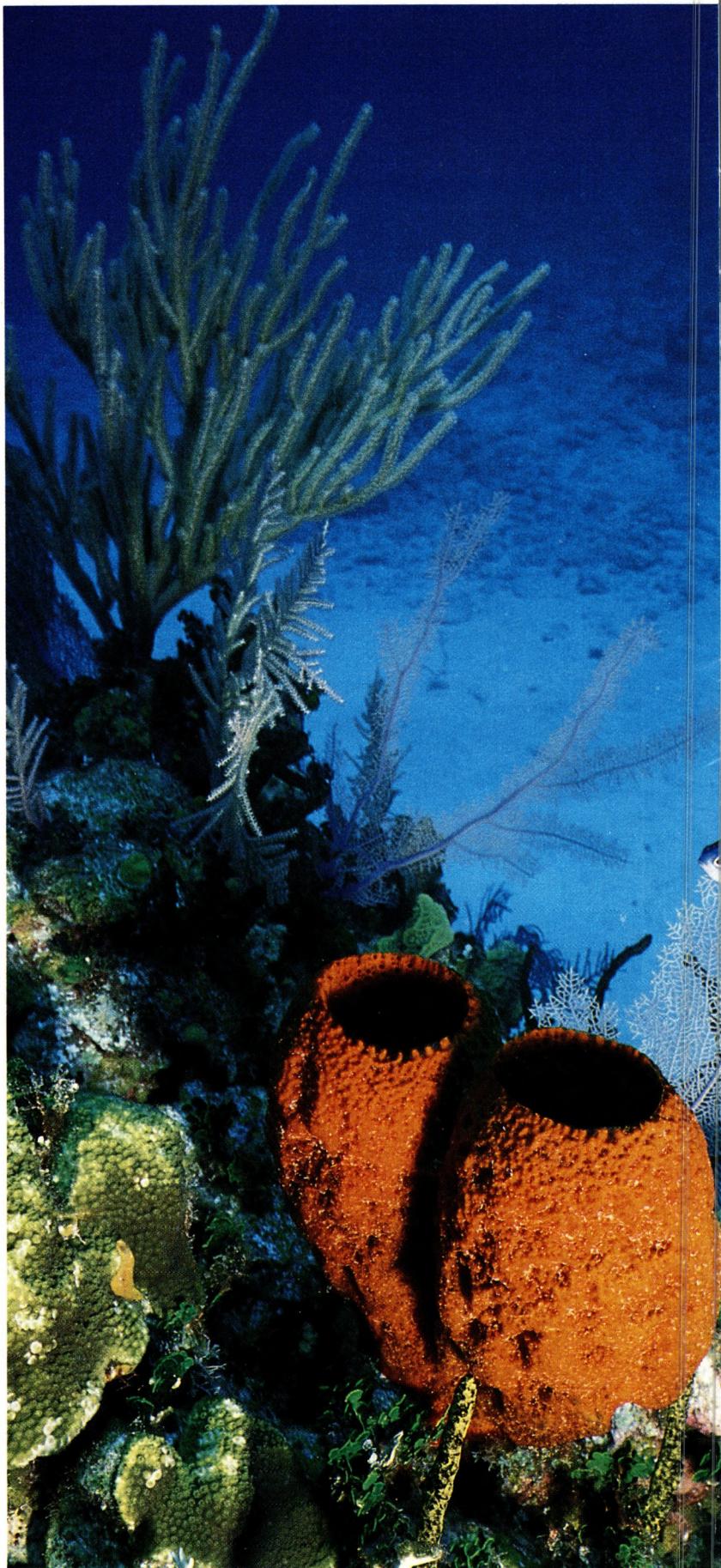
“Those who know us, love us.”

A TAIL OF TWO OCEANS

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY NANCY SEFTON

Right: Sponges are the chief source of bright colors on a typical Caribbean reef. This red vase sponge glows against sapphire-blue water. Below: Broccoli corals come in every hue of the rainbow on Indo-Pacific reefs but aren't found in the Caribbean.

Opposite page: Although both oceans are home to small fish that reside with stinging anemones, the clownfish (left) is found only in the Indo-Pacific. The most commonly seen symbiotic relationship of this kind in the Caribbean involves the diamond blenny (right).





JUST A FEW

years ago, divers with a yen to plunge into warm, clear waters wound up in the Caribbean. It was relatively close and affordable. Even more important, its dive operations were a known factor, the majority being well established, reputed to be both safe and efficient.

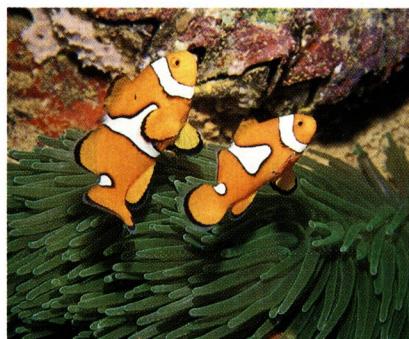
For the average diver, the vast Pacific was a little like the moon—remote, elusive, untamed. The diver who did succumb to the lure of the unknown had to brave serious jet lag, flying perhaps halfway around the planet. Here was a true adventurer, an intrepid bringing along his own tank. With luck, he might locate some rusty compressor, then con a native fisherman out of his dugout, striking out across the waves to isolated coral bommies, unexplored and unnamed.

Things have changed. Indo-Pacific dive facilities, including both land-based resorts and live-aboards, are now a match for the region's superb coral reefs and exciting wrecks. Pick up any dive magazine, and you'll find its destination features to be fairly evenly divided between the Caribbean and the Indo-Pacific.

Thus the traveling diver now has a choice of oceans, but it may be a bit perplexing. Which ocean is best for him?

I'm often asked which region has the better diving. That's like being asked to compare a filet mignon and a hot fudge sundae. They're both fantastic, but quite different (and I wouldn't eliminate either one of them from the menu).

The most obvious difference in the two regions is species diversity. Veterans of Caribbean diving are sometimes astonished when they first open their eyes on a South Pacific reef. Corals have unfamiliar shapes, and their colors can be dazzling. The fish? Up to 10 times as many species are found in the Pacific, compared to the Caribbean.



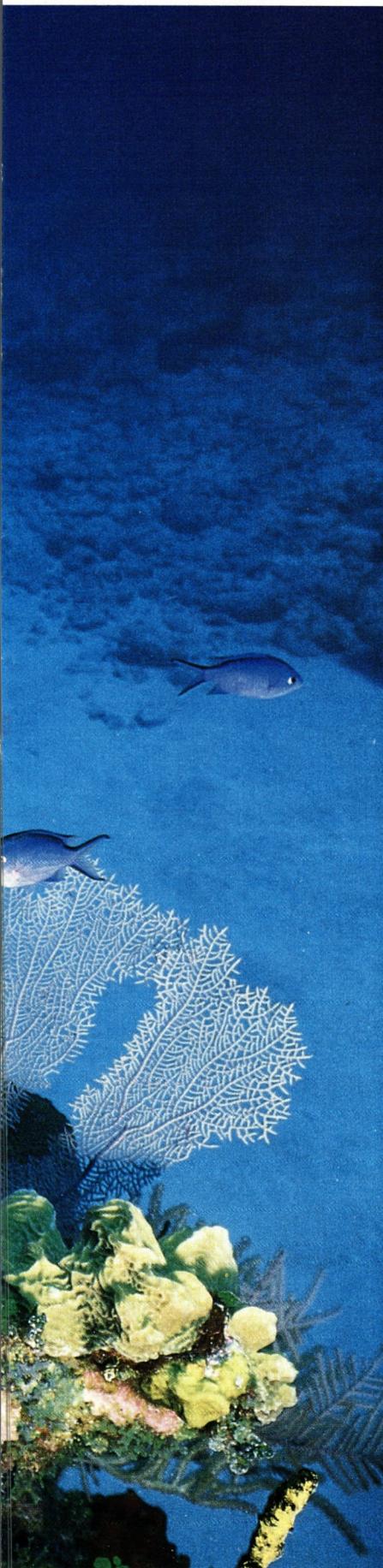
Why these differences? Early in our planet's history, there was only one giant continent called Pangaea, surrounded by a massive ocean that circled most of the globe. The Caribbean, a relatively small body of water, was not created until Pangaea finished breaking up, the pieces gradually drifting apart to form the continents we know today.

◎ A MATTER OF TIME ◎

Thus the Caribbean is quite young in geological terms. Moreover, the Ice Ages, which periodically raised and lowered sea level in this region, destroyed those reefs which had managed to establish themselves. Across the Indo-Pacific, historically free of such interruptions, there has been much more time for marine species to evolve. There's been more space as well; the Indo-Pacific embraces two-thirds of the globe and comprises 66 percent of the earth's total ocean area. From a diver's perspective it extends from the Red Sea and the east coast of Africa to the Galapagos. By comparison, the Caribbean is a millpond.

Thus any animal group, be it worms, mollusks, corals or fish, is represented by more species than in the Caribbean. Stony corals, the reef builders, number about 65 species in the Caribbean, and between 250 and 500 species in the Pacific. A more specific example is the butterflyfish; five or six species are endemic to Caribbean reefs, but open any fish field guide to the Indo-Pacific, and you'll be awed by the sheer numbers and varieties of butterflies portrayed there.

Photographers, often concerned with color, find that although both oceans sparkle with all hues of the rainbow, the brightest colors have different sources. The Caribbean, for example, is home to hundreds of species of sponges, prominent on every reef, showing off their red, pink and yellow tones. On Pacific reefs, sponges



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are less in evidence; instead, the dominant source of bright colors are the soft corals, sometimes referred to as broccoli corals, which shine like beacons in shades of hot pink, red, purple and orange. These corals are endemic only to the Indo-Pacific; with a few exceptions, soft corals of the Caribbean tend to have rather muted colors.

◎ TRADE OFFS ◎

Water conditions vary as well, between the two regions. In general the Caribbean boasts slightly better visibility, but there's a trade-off. Increased plankton levels in Indo-Pacific waters, while decreasing clarity, nevertheless foster a greater profusion of marine life.

Except for Cozumel's legendary drift diving, popular Caribbean destinations are relatively current-free. This provides beginning divers with a more relaxed atmosphere in which to improve their skills and to enjoy watching reef creatures.

Most Pacific dive vacations, whether land based or spent on live-aboards, involve some diving in strong currents, at times up to one and a half knots. Only experienced divers capable of handling themselves under such conditions are comfortable with this situation.

There are rewards. Pacific reefs literally come to life when currents are running; broccoli corals expand to feed in all their glory, and predators switch into high gear. Feeding frenzies erupt among fish of all sizes. As one veteran live-aboard captain says, "If you want to witness some real underwater action, don't pass up a current dive!" Regional operators are skilled in making current dives both safe and enjoyable. Divers are often dropped off at a starting point and subsequently picked up downcurrent.

Divers are lured to undersea walls like moths to a flame. Both oceans have their share. The same goes for shore diving. In the right spot, in either the Caribbean or Indo-Pacific, one can don a tank, step into the water and kick a few yards to a spectacular vertical drop-off teeming with life.

Thankfully, water temperatures in all tropical regions have roughly the same range, a comfortable 78°-85°F. But each region has its special seasonal weather patterns that are important to "know before you go." Certain times of the year may bring heavy rains or the risk of running into a cyclone or a hurricane.

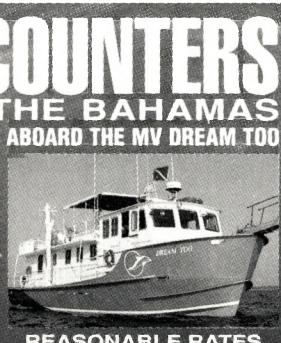
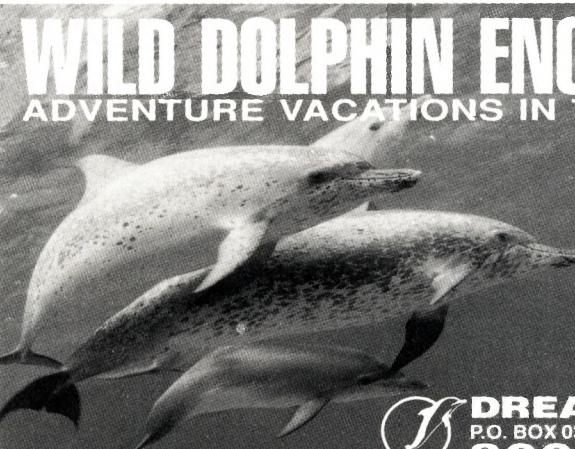
◎ GETTING THERE ◎

The choice of one ocean over another may depend on where you live. From North America's west coast, it's almost as far to the Caribbean's Virgin Islands as it is to Fiji in the South Pacific. For most Americans and Canadians, however,

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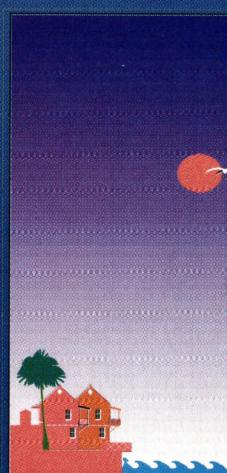
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the Caribbean remains closer to home, and hence, less expensive to visit.

Perhaps it's because of high standards among established dive facilities and resorts in the Caribbean, that Indo-Pacific operators, competing for the traveling diver's patronage, have followed suit. Most live-aboards and resorts there maintain an equally high standard of cleanliness, meals and general ambience. Nowadays, film processing, camera rentals, photo instruction and scuba resort courses are available in many Pacific destinations, just as they are in the Caribbean.

As a photographer, I've found something special about each ocean that attracts me. For easy, laid-back diving and maximum clarity, (which means elimination of back-scatter) I'm lured to the Caribbean. When I'm looking for hot colors and species diversity, I can't resist the Indo-Pacific.

Whichever ocean you are contemplating, there is a full compliment of resorts and live-aboards to choose from. Be assured that each ocean offers a lifetime's worth of exotic reefs to explore. □

Nancy Sefton has lived in the Caribbean for the last 21 years and has made extensive trips to all the popular dive destinations throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

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SEASONS

Caribbean: Winds and seas are calmer April-October. Winter months bring higher winds and cooler water, but, often, better visibility. Rainy season generally occurs in summer and fall. Official hurricane season is June-November.

Indo-Pacific: South Pacific islands can experience cyclones November-April, with December-February generally the wettest. North of the Equator, summers bring wet monsoons to the Indian Ocean. In countries on the equator, weather conditions are highly localized and should be investigated individually before you go.

◎ DIVE RESORTS RATED ◎

(120 pages, In Depth Publishing)

Once you choose an ocean to explore, you need a home base for that upcoming dive trip. One of the best ways to find great resorts is to ask other divers. How about a conference call with 1,000 divers who averaged 3.4 international dive trips each within the past four years? That's about what you get between the covers of *Dive Resorts Rated* published annually by *In Depth*, the consumer newsletter for scuba divers.

Rating forms are mailed to subscribers a couple of times each year for their opinions on the accommodations and diving at resorts they've recently visited. Since the dynamics are constantly changing the rating is an on-going program with the most recent computations published every January.

The book also contains readers comments, some of which are so detailed you feel like you've been there yourself. Approximately 60 destinations and more than 200 resorts/live-aboards are covered. A matrix chart for each destination shows at a glance which resorts have disabled access, shore dives, day care, golf courses and a myriad of other options.

For the 1992 edition, the intrepid *In Depth* travelers rated the following resorts tops for a combination of fine accommodations and great diving.

Caribbean Destination

1. Little Cayman
2. Guanaja
3. Bonaire
4. Cozumel
5. Bonaire
6. Grand Cayman
7. Virgin Gorda, BVI
8. Grand Cayman
9. St. Vincent
10. Dominica

Resort

Pirate's Point
Bayman Bay Club
Sand Dollar
Galapago Inn
Carib Inn
Tortuga Club
Bitter End
Plantation Village
Young Island
Evergreen Hotel

Non-Caribbean Destination

1. Palau
2. Egypt
3. Maldives
4. Fiji
5. Fiji
6. Fiji
7. Fiji
8. Palau
9. Fiji
10. Egypt

Resort

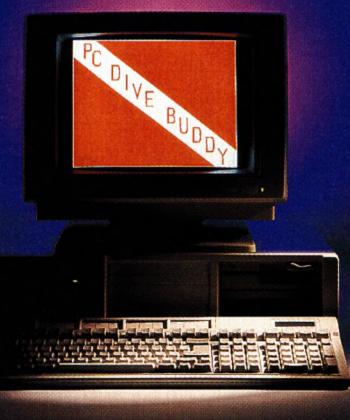
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Fayrouz Hilton
Bathala Tourist Resort
Qamea Beach Club
Dive Taveuni
Ocean Pacific Club
Dive Kadavu/Matana
Palau Mariana
The Regent of Fiji
Ghazala Resort

The only way to obtain a copy of *Dive Resorts Rated* is to subscribe to *In Depth*, P.O. Box 90215, Austin, TX 78709. Eleven issues are \$39 per year, with a copy of *Dive Resorts Rated* given as a premium.

—Reviewed by Gwen Roland



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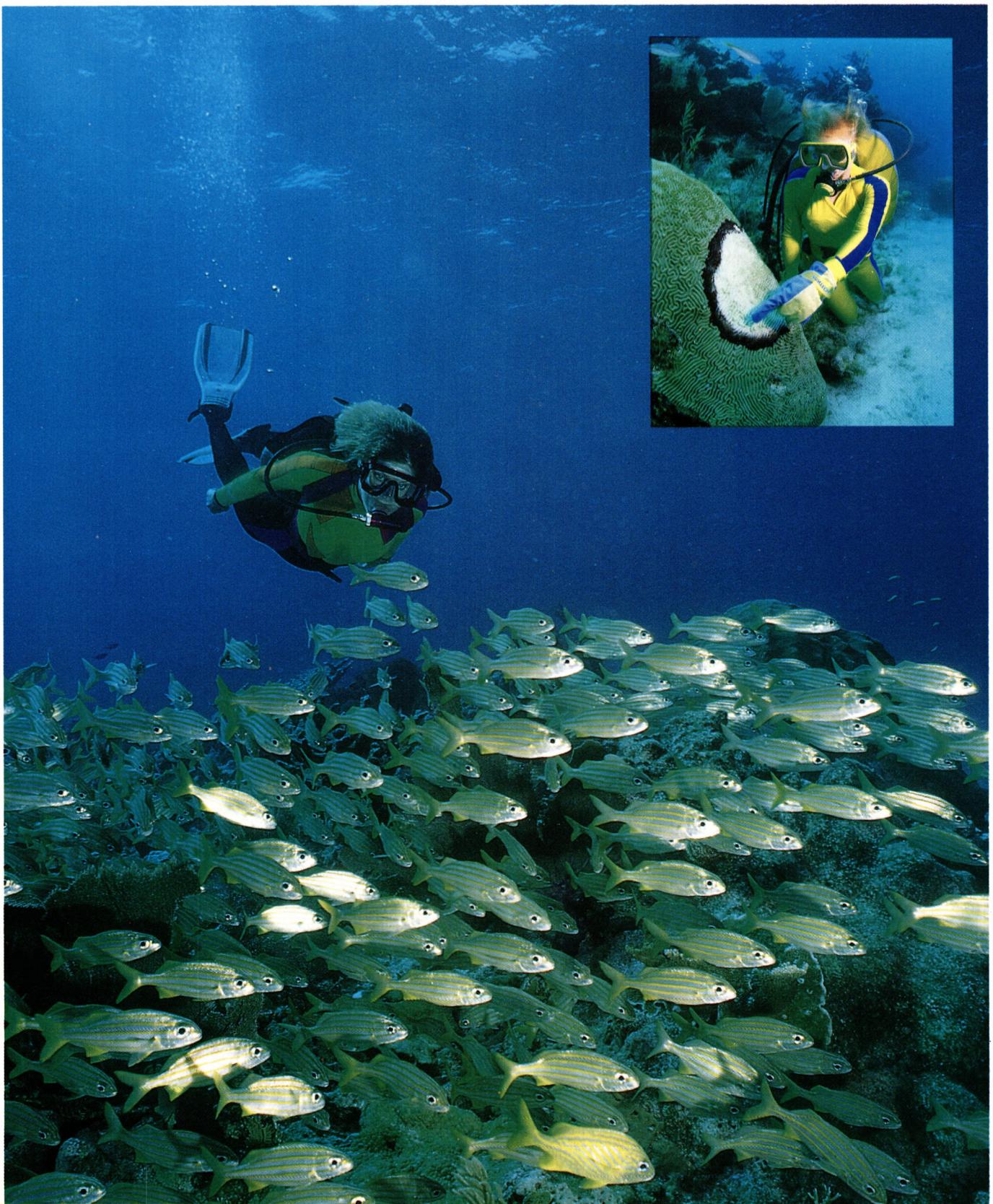
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Schooling fish are accustomed to sharing their space with divers in the Keys. Lively grunts zip past Suzanne Cummings on a plunge at Pennecamp State Park. Photo by Stuart Cummings

A finger on the problem is usually a step toward a solution, but when it comes to black band disease scientists are as mystified as ever about the origins of this ancient coral killer. Photo by Larry Lipsky.



THE FLORIDA KEYS

DIVERS GEAR UP FOR BATTLE TO
PROTECT THEIR BELOVED REEF

BY FRED D. GARTH

ey West, 1932. The sea was as smooth as an onion skin as Ernie scrutinized the horizon. A good day for marlin, he thought. Seconds later the zing of the reel rang out. Hours later children of the small fishing town ran to the boat to celebrate the big blue.

That night over several bourbons, Ernie bellowed his success to whomever was in earshot and complained that Key West was getting too crowded.

"Cuba's the place," he said. "So many marlin they jump in the boat. And big? Huge fish. Like you've never seen."

Although it was not so long ago, only 13,000 permanent residents were scattered from Key Largo to Key West, and tourism was as insignificant as the fear of winter.

Connected only by rail from 1912 until the overseas highway was completed in 1938, travel was safari-like, shades of Meryl Streep and Robert Redford in *Out of Africa*. The few visitors who did come only had a couple of hotels from which to choose, and finding a dive shop was like taking a trip into the future.

Eventually, Ernest Hemingway made his trek to Cuba and found the marlin he boasted about. But the charm of Key West brought him back to spout fish stories from his stool in Sloppy Joe's bar until 1939, when the lure of mountains and big game became his passion.

KEY WEST, 1992

Fifty years, 80,000 permanent residents and several million tourists per year later, increased people pressure has put the Keys on alert. Dangling into the sea like a string of piñatas, the Keys are exposed to hazards such as offshore oil drilling, storm water and pesticide runoff, poor sewage treatment and even misguided ships crashing into the fragile coral reefs. Even what seems to be a protection measure, designating the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS), has come under heavy scrutiny. Caught between politics and the threat of pollution, the state of the Florida Keys is one of some conflict.

Unfortunately, divers have gotten a bad rap in recent years. Sport divers have been blamed for kicking the reef to death. While there is some impact, divers have actually been heroes—a driving force to maintain the reefs they love. Divers alerted the public to problems in the first place. They've set up education programs, installed mooring buoys, sunk artificial reefs and explored new offshore reef systems to alleviate pressure on overburdened reefs nearer to shore, which are popular to boat loads of snorkelers.



Above: As if he knows he is protected, a sea turtle cruises among divers at Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary. Photo by Beth Higdon.

Opposite top: Behemoth display of orange elephant ear sponge exemplifies the underwater glamour for which the Keys are famous. Photo by Larry Lipsky.

Below: Multitudes of sea creatures perished in fish traps before the indiscriminate collectors were banned in 1990. Photo by Stephen Frink.



residents. It is this type of attitude and action that is becoming more of a standard in the Keys.

SLICK VICTORY

Along with slowed growth, there are other positive forces at work. One is the ban on oil and gas exploration within the Keys National Marine Sanctuary. With some luck and lobbying, a proposed 10-year ban on activating oil leases just outside the sanctuary is expected to be passed as law. Even harvesting of live rock and coral for aquariums, which in past years removed tons of the reef, is being phased out over a two- to three-year period.

With the exception of those individuals working tirelessly to protect the reefs, probably the Keys' greatest friends are the resilience and replenishment of the ecosystem. As Jacques Cousteau said, "Nature will take care of itself, it's man we have to worry about." Clear, warm Gulf Stream waters still bathe and cleanse the 220-mile archipelago. More than 150 species of tropical fish and over 85 percent of the coral native to the tropical west Atlantic are found in the Keys. This is the world's third largest barrier reef we're talking about, and the sights are still plentiful as well as gorgeous.

BOLDLY GOING WHERE NO MAN...

For divers, the Keys offer a wonderfully unique experience. It's the Caribbean connected by road, accessible by America's first love—our automobiles. The water is clear and warm. The sun is hot, and there are miles and miles of reef to be discovered. English is the primary language (although Spanish helps as you pass through Miami). A dollar is worth a dollar. The low-key (not Looe Key), laid-back attitude that drew Jimmy Buffet and scores of other divers, sailors and sun seekers permeates the soul of the Keys.

Because the near shore reefs are shallow (0-30 feet) as well as dived (and snorkeled) heavily, some operators are exploring new horizons. Besides, many divers are looking for sights deeper than 30 feet. For example, some 8 to 16 miles off Key West, the reef runs from 40 to 130 feet and is crawling with big critters.

"You don't get all of the schools of

"NATURE WILL TAKE CARE OF ITSELF,"

tropical fish like the in-shore reefs," said John Watkins of Viewfinder Dive Center in Key West. "But there's some of the best large marine life you'll find anywhere in the world. We see lots of big rays, some big jewfish and sharks."

The choice of services—dive shops, hotels, restaurants, rental cars and the conveniences Americans love—are as varied as the ocean tide. With so much dive activity, it's easy to find plenty of opposing opinions on what should be done to preserve the Keys for future divers.

For example, the designation of the Keys as a national marine sanctuary, has not exactly been accepted with open arms in Monroe County.

"We originally pushed for the designation in order to keep freighters from grounding on the reef," said Bob Brayman of Hall's Diving Center in Marathon. "We achieved that but later found out we could have gotten what we wanted another way."

The federal regulations that came as part of the National Marine Sanctuary package is more than residents bargained for. Fishermen are concerned for their jobs because taking certain game and market fish has been banned within the sanctuary. Treasure salvors are upset that their hunting is being restricted. And dive operators are looking at bans on spearfishing and lobstering in certain areas, which could impact their cash flow.

TO DIG OR NOT TO DIG

It was just 35 miles off Key West that Mel Fisher, the undisputed world champion of treasure hunting dug into fame and fortune in July of 1985. After 16 years of following a trail like a pack of hounds, Fisher discovered the mother load of \$400 million in gold, silver and rubies.

Today, perhaps the most stirring debate in the Keys concerns the rights of salvors to dig (or blow) their claims. They use contraptions dubbed mailboxes (which look like mammoth upside-down snorkels) to direct a jet-stream of propeller wash at the sandy bottom. Critics claim that the heavy silting from mailboxes clogs and kills coral polyps, as well as destroys valuable sea grass beds. Advocates argue that they have exposed acres of substrate, which now serve as a foundation for new coral growth.



NOAA saw Fisher's latest exploit as "blatant disregard to refrain from damaging sea grass habitat in the Coffin Patch area" and slapped an injunction on his company, Salvors Inc. This caused many to misinterpret NOAA restrictions as a ban on salvaging activities within the boundaries of the FKNMS. However, Ed Lindelof, Branch Chief of the Gulf and Caribbean Region of NOAA's Sanctuaries and Reserves Division stated, "Salvors have always been able to look for treasure as long as their actions do not cause resource damage. In fact, we already have in place a permitting process which will allow recovery of artifacts and have issued one permit."

Below: A NOAA scientist cements damaged coral back in place after the freighter Wellwood ran aground in the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary. Photo by Robert Holland.



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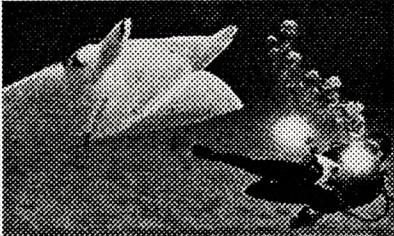
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Salvors are still steaming over the rule, adding that the majority of historical finds have been made by private treasure hunters rather than by government employees.

I'M A-GOIN' FISHIN'... OR AM I?

Another hot controversy at the moment concerns spearfishing and lobstering. A common misconception is that spearfishing ravages the fish population. To the contrary, fishing from a boat, long line fishing, fish traps and netting are each more detrimental than spearfishing.

"Spearfishing is selective fishing," said Tim Taylor of Looker Diving Center in Key West. "Long line fishing and fish traps are far more damaging. They catch indiscriminately—parrotfish, squirrelfish, whatever. And when left unattended, the fish die."

"When you see what you're going to shoot, you can take only what you're going to eat."

Positive action was taken in 1990, when fish traps were banned in the Keys. To date, long line fishing is unrestricted.

"I've also seen lobster traps weighted down with cement blocks banging up the reef, especially when they break loose or drag across the bottom," Taylor said.

Part of a developing comprehensive plan for the Keys calls for core zones in which spearfishing and collecting will be banned. The proof of resurgence can be clearly seen at Looe Key where restrictions on fishing caused a dramatic growth in fish population.

"I've seen a tremendous increase in predators like snapper and grouper since fish traps were outlawed," Taylor said. "It's another positive step for the Keys."

WHAT ABOUT CORAL BLEACHING?

Some problems are not so easily identified. Coral killers such as bleaching and black band disease are as mysterious as they are deadly to the reef. The origin of bleaching, a whitening of live coral that has been observed worldwide, is yet unresolved. However, scientists at the 7th International Coral Reef Symposium, held this year in June on the island of Guam, linked bleaching to nutrient loading, usually associated with land-based runoff and sewage.

As if bleaching isn't enough to worry about, black band disease is also attacking live corals. Not a new enemy of coral, black band scars have been observed on ancient coral heads prompting scientists to believe that it has been around for centuries.

Fortunately bleaching and black band disease affect only a small percentage of an overall healthy reef. Newcomers

simply see miles of vibrant coral filled with colorful tropical fish, while concerned locals keep tabs on these mysterious maladies of the reef.

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

With enough controversies to fill the remainder of the decade, there seems to be agreement on one thing. The Florida Keys need a comprehensive management plan. While the FKNMS designation in 1990 by President Bush established its own management rules, most locals don't believe that bureaucrats in Washington know what's best for offshore Monroe County (Key Largo to Key West). The answer may lie in a home-grown management plan, and currently, the seeds for that are being sown. Due to their collective clout, divers are a powerful force behind the local movement.

Concerned divers have helped to implement educational systems so snorkelers, as well as divers, will be aware of their potential impact. Pre-dive briefings emphasize the need to avoid striking the coral and, in most cases, prohibit gathering shells, coral or other sea life.

"We have over 650 outlets that we hand deliver our reef etiquette materials to," said Reef Relief's Quirilo. "This includes hotels, marinas, dive shops, charter boats and anyone who comes in contact with locals and tourists."

Divers have engineered the installation of more than 300 mooring buoys during the past 10 years, protecting reefs from misplaced anchors. Add to that an aggressive artificial reef program, which has taken pressure off of Mother Nature's natural sons and opened up new opportunities for divers. Organizations such as Reef Relief and Project Reefkeeper have compiled an impressive array of brochures and videos, as well as a five-language booklet that discusses reef etiquette.

"Education is the key," Quirilo said. "It's easy to point the finger at the other guy. But the truth is, all of us contribute to the situation."

Like any ecosystem, the Keys are a delicate balancing act. Even as existing problems are solved, new ones will occur. However as long as the direction is towards protection and not destruction, then divers, the Keys and the rest of the world can look forward to a bright future in Monroe County. ■

For more information contact the Florida Keys and Key West Visitors Bureau at 1-800-FLA-KEYS or 1-305-296-3811. To contact Reef Relief write to Box 430, Key West, FL 33041 or call 1-305-394-3100. To contact Project Reefkeeper write to 16345 W. Dixie Hwy., Suite 1121, Miami, FL 33160.

Fred D. Garth is managing editor/publisher of Scuba Times Magazine.

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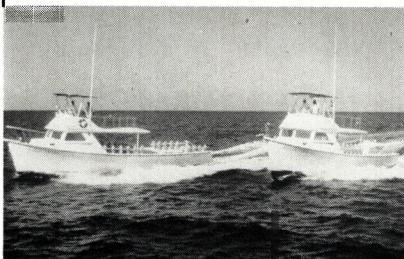
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FLORIDA KEYS TRAVEL INFO

GENERAL

Number of islands: Approximately 45 to 50

Population: 80,000

Highest elevation: 12 feet, Islamorada

Located in what body of water? Gulf Of Mexico/Atlantic

Air Service: Miami International—full service, Marathon Key—small planes, Key West—jet service

Cities of departure: All major U.S. cities

Price range of hotel room: \$50—\$300+ per night

Avg. cost of two-tank dive day: \$25—\$45

Avg. round trip flight cost to Key West from:

New York: \$230

Los Angeles: \$310

Florida Keys / Key West Visitors Bureau Ph: 1(800) FLA-KEYS

DIVING

Winter

Summer

Water temperature: 75°F

85°F

Average U/W visibility: 40-50 feet

50-80 feet

(Offshore visibility is generally 100 feet or more).

Air temperature: 75°F

85°F

Best diving months: March-June

Camera Rentals—Still/Video: yes

E-6 Film Processing: yes

Nearest recompression chamber: Hyperbarics Int'l., Key Largo

Wall diving? no

Wreck diving? yes

Night Diving? yes

FLORIDA KEYS MAP

UPPER & MIDDLE KEYS

DIVE SITES:

1. Carysfort Reef
2. Elbow
3. Christ of the Deep Statue
4. Benwood Wreck
5. Mosquito Bank
6. Dixie Shoal
7. French Reef
8. Molasses Reef
9. Bib & Duane
10. Pickles Reef
11. Conch Reef
12. Little Conch Reef
13. Davis Reef
14. El Infante & the Spanish Treasure Ships
15. Keys Bridges
16. Hen & Chickens
17. Crocker Reef
18. Coffins Patch

19. Delta Shoal

20. Sombrero Reef

21. The Pot Wreck

22. Looe Key

23. Eagle Wreck

24. Content Keys

32. Cottrell Key (Gulf Side Reef)

33. Chet's Wreck #1

34. Marquesas Keys

35. Cosgrove Shoal

36. Marquesas Rock

37. The Wrecks in Marquesas

LOWER KEYS DIVE SITES:

25. Cayman Salvager

26. The Sambos

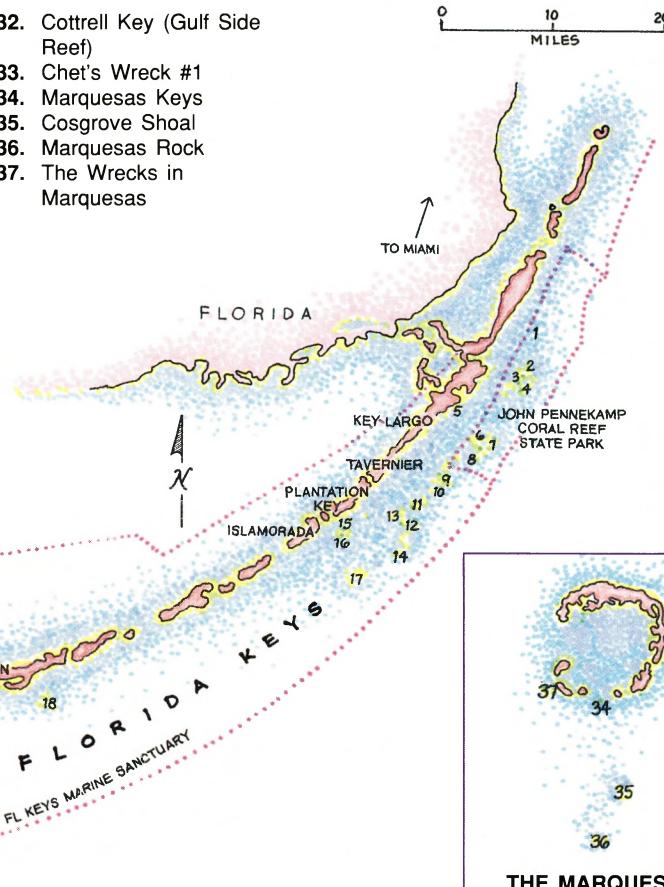
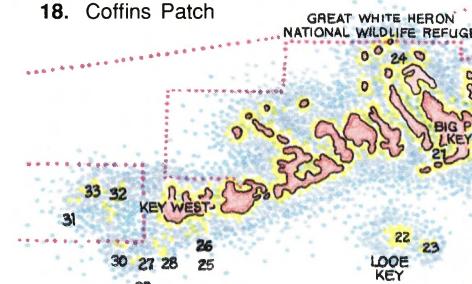
27. Sand Key

28. Rock Key & Eastern Dry Rocks

29. Outside Reefs

30. Western Dry Rocks (the K Marker)

31. The Lakes



(22 miles west of Key West & part of the Key West National Wildlife Refuge)



Hurricane Andrew is gone... but spectacular diving remains!

The storm hit south Florida hard, and some PADI Dive Operations suffered substantial losses. However, a majority of dive operators in the area are open for business. PADI encourages travelers considering a trip to the area to proceed. The storm's destructive path was actually quite narrow, missing the most popular dive areas in south Florida, the Keys, the Bahamas and the Gulf Coast.

If you don't have a trip scheduled, but want to be involved, you *can* help thousands of residents left homeless by the storm. PADI has established the **PADI Hurricane**

Andrew Relief Fund to assist those displaced by this natural disaster. Cash contributions can be mailed to:

PADI Hurricane Andrew
Relief Fund
1251 East Dyer Road #100
Santa Ana, CA 92705-5605 USA

Contributions will be forwarded to local relief agencies for distribution in the affected area.

This message is provided by PADI and *Scuba Times* on behalf of the diving communities in the areas affected by Hurricane Andrew.

PADI®

SCUBA
TIMES

Charge of the Light Brigade

In the excitement of picking out that first round of underwater photo gear, it's easy to get revved up about cameras and lenses but only invest a minimum amount of thought and money into flash choice. However when it comes time to refit, even the casual photographer has learned to appreciate a dependable flash, perhaps after finding out the hard way that the most advanced photo equipment can't capture a picture in the dark.

Nikon SB 104 Speedlight



The introduction of Nikon's brainy and pricy SB 104 Speedlight in conjunction with the Nikon RS camera has rippled some excitement through the stable world of underwater strobes. One of the most notable innovations is the camera slave feature, which allows you to set up the camera and SB 104 near a shy subject and move away to activate the camera by remote control with an additional flash. Another first is the rear curtain sync which helps create an illusion of movement. In this mode the flash fires just before the shutter closes, photographing a streak of light following the subject.

Along with regular TTL flash, the SB 104 offers two more options. In the normal TTL mode, the camera reads the flash output, determines when enough light has been shed on the frame, then shuts the flash off. In the Matrix Balanced Fill flash mode, it determines the correct exposure for the background ambient light, calculates the correct amount of flash for the foreground and balances the two,

blending the artificial light in the foreground with the natural light in the background. In the third optional mode—Center Weighted TTL—only light for the subject in the center of the frame is considered; the background is ignored.

THE CAMERA DETERMINES WHEN ENOUGH LIGHT HAS BEEN SHED ON THE FRAME, THEN SHUTS THE FLASH OFF.

Mechanical advances include slide bars that use infrared light to activate the interior controls, rather than through-the-housing switches. This eliminates moving parts, o-rings and the possibility of leaks. Signal lights warn of overheating and electrical malfunctions as well as leaks. There's even an emergency flasher in case you surface away from the boat. It will flash every two seconds for four to five hours on a full charge.

Like the matching Nikonos RS camera, the SB 104 is a leap ahead in technology. Yet it lacks a modeling light and covers only 100 degrees. Because the SB 104 is brand new on the market, field tests thus far are limited. However, if it follows the Nikonos tradition of popularity, it will be lighting photos for years to come.

Ikelite Substrobe 150



Ikelite's Substrobe 150 is still a top choice with professionals and amateurs alike. The least expensive of the big three, it offers a modeling light strong enough to double as a dive light in clear water. Another favored feature is the audible chirp (in addition to the standard ready light), which lets you know when it's fired up without taking your eyes off the subject. Anyone who has ever wasted a dive trip because their strobe cord was crimped by the suitcase or simply went on the blink will appreciate user-interchangeable cords. Nikon has this feature on all of their strobes, which will work with any housed SLR equipped with a Nikon mount. The Ikelite strobe will work with Nikon, Sea & Sea and housed SLR cameras. The cord can be removed from

both the camera and the flash for easy replacement at the dive site, if you plan ahead by stowing away an extra cord.

While it lacks the cutting-edge options of the SB 104, the Substrobe 150 has proved dependable under adverse

conditions around the world for thousands of photographers. It requires the longest recycle time of the three. Each photographer's needs determine if six seconds is too long to wait between frames.

Sea & Sea YS-200



A whopping 400 flashes per charge underscores the popularity of the Sea & Sea YS-200. Also, the ready light comes on at 100-percent charge which means you can fire at the first blink. Four arms and other accessories make it one of the most convenient strobes to customize for your system. Like the Ikelite Substrobe 150, the YS-200 has a broad 110-degree beam angle to cover a 15mm lens (94 degrees) with ease. With a diffuser it can handle a 16mm fisheye. It is also the smallest and most compact of the wide-beam strobes, always a plus for gear-laden divers. The 10-hour recharging time takes five times longer than the SB 104 and more than twice the time for the Ikelite, but with 400 flashes at your disposal some divers might not need a charge the entire trip, which means less to pack and less to think about. There are hints that Sea & Sea has a new version in the works.

Whether your priorities are quick recovery between flashes, in-the-field cord changes or mega-flashes per charge there's a dependable strobe to suit your photographic needs. One of the best ways to find out which strobe will make light work of your flash chores is to talk to other photographers and even swap systems with dive buddies until you find the one that works best for you. ■

—Gwen Roland

**AN ILLUMINATING LOOK AT THE BIG-GUN
STROBES**

FEATURES	NIKON SB 104 SPEEDLIGHT	IKELITE SUBSTROBE 150	SEA & SEA YS-200
POWER			
F stop for subject distance of three feet	F16	F11	F11
Size of beam angle	100 degrees	110 degrees	110 degrees
Size lens it will cover	Nikonos 15mm	SLR 18mm Nikonos 15mm	Nikonos 15mm
OPERATIONS			
Flash slave	Yes	Yes	Yes
Camera/flash slave	Yes	No	No
Emergency signal flash	Yes	No	No
Firing Modes	Fill flash / Matrix balanced Center waited TTL / Manual	TTL Auto / Manual	Manual
Power Settings	full, 1/4, 1/16	full, 1/2, 1/4	full, 1/2
MISC. FEATURES			
Modeling light	No	Yes	No
Monitor signals	flash ready / moisture alert overheat alert electrical continuity	flash ready (audio/visual)	flash ready
How are controls operated?	light activated slide bars	switches	switches
Buoyancy	slightly positive	neutral	slightly negative
Camera compatibility	All Nikonos housed SLRs	Nikonos housed SLRs Motormarine II	Nikonos, housed SLRs Motormarine II
BATTERY PACK			
Number of flashes on full charge	120	150	400
Recycle time between flashes	3 seconds	6 seconds	5 seconds
Power source	NiCad	NiCad	NiCad
Recharging time	2 hours (1 battery) 4 hours (2 batteries)	4 hours	10 hours
How many will it charge at once?	2	1	1
Current	110/220	110/220	110/220
Overcharge protection	Yes	Yes	No
PRICE*	\$1,532.00	\$659.95	\$775.00

*(excluding battery pack/charger)

Photo by Jerry Schnabel. Model: Susan Lee Swager

Diving in Fiji can be like that

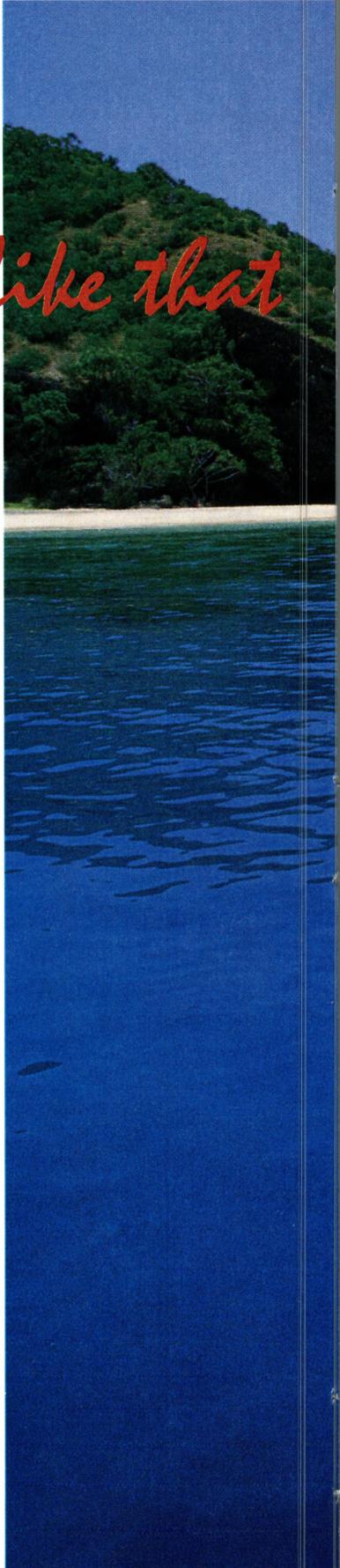
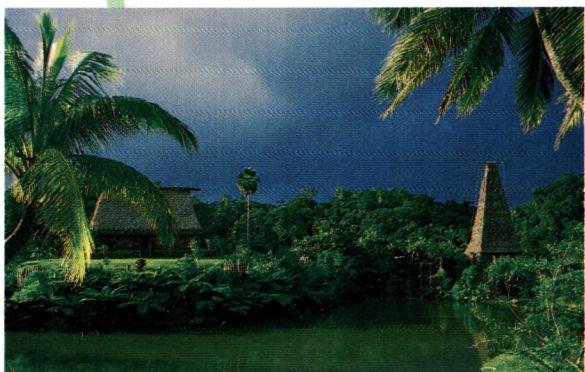
BY GREG BROWN

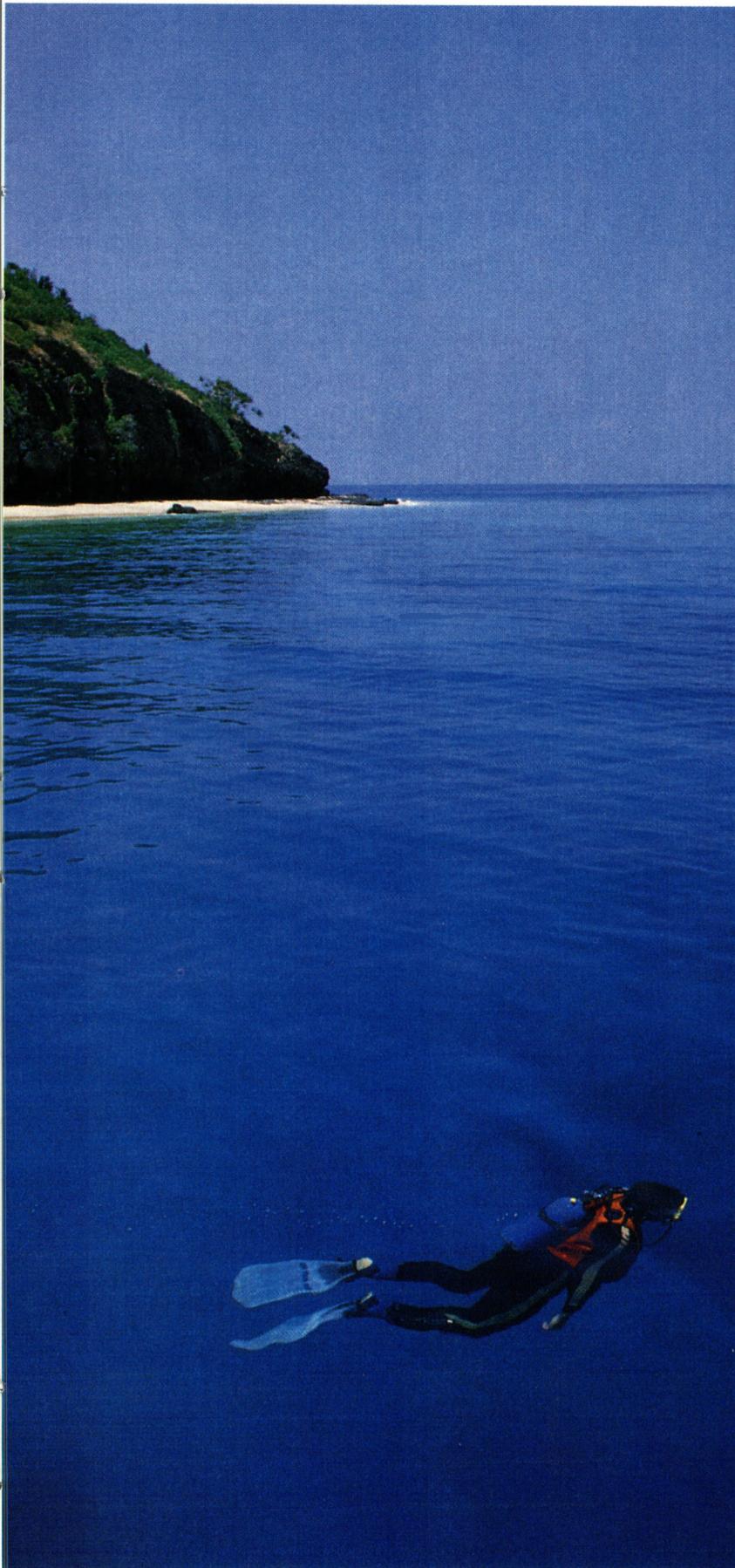
Twenty-five feet of the blue Pacific Ocean lay above me—and 5,000 feet gaped directly underneath. Thousands of helpless, shimmering two-inch baitfish surrounded me. I was their port in a storm. And as storms go, this one was nothing short of a blue-water hurricane.

The pounding rain came in the form of skipjack tuna, an endless assault of voracious predators hurling themselves among the poor, huddled masses. The fearsome, lethal winds taking the form of sleek, aggressive six- to eight-foot silky sharks. Tuna were flying by in all directions. Occasionally, they wouldn't veer off quick enough. They would graze my shoulders, my sides—hit my fins. But the "rain" didn't bother me; it was those ever-increasing "winds" that became a source of concern. I was using my strobe every few seconds now. Not to light up the melee, but to fend off the sharks. In keeping with the foul weather theme, you could refer to the strobe as my windbreaker. Consider how effective a windbreaker is in a hurricane. I was in trouble.

Who the hell could take pictures in this kind of weather? One large silky, an eight footer, had taken a strong interest in me. Over and over it hit me,

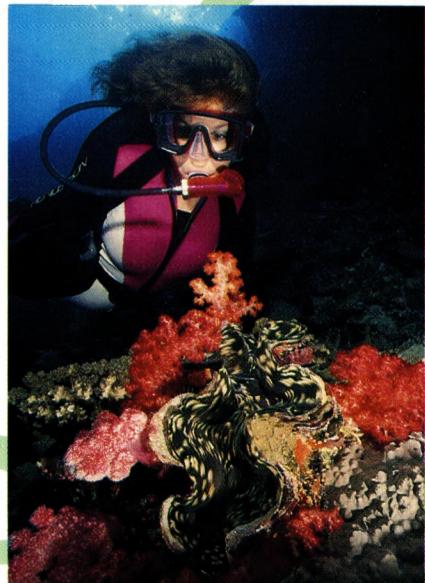
like a prize-fighter going for the kill. First it slammed against my knees, then it grabbed my fins. With each attempted strike, I struck back hard with my strobe. Finally, the hungry silky retreated. I had room to maneuver. I maneuvered quickly out of the water.





Above: A blue ribbon moray bobs his head and grunts at the photographer as a defense tactic in Bengga Lagoon. Photo by Stuart Cummings.

Left: There's still plenty of room to lose yourself in the depths of beauty around Fiji. Photo by Greg Brown.



Above: Susanne Cummings inspects a tridacna clam on a coral buttress of the Great Wall of Gau, which starts at a depth of four feet and plunges to 3,000 feet. Photo by Stuart Cummings.

Far Left: The Cultural Gardens in Pacific Harbor represent the Fijian reverence for nature and antiquity. Photo by Greg Brown.

Fiji 1,000 DIVERS CAN'T BE WRONG

If you rely on fellow divers' advice, then Fiji should be your next destination. In the book, Dive Resorts Rated, By In Depth Publishing, five of the top ten dive resorts in the Pacific were located in Fiji. Over 1,000 divers ranked the resorts on accommodations and diving—and picked Fiji 50% of the time. With 322 islands, accommodations ranging from luxury to bungalow, world-class live-aboard dive boats and enough diving to fill 1,000 lifetimes, Fiji is for you. Don't take a chance. Take a trip—to Fiji!

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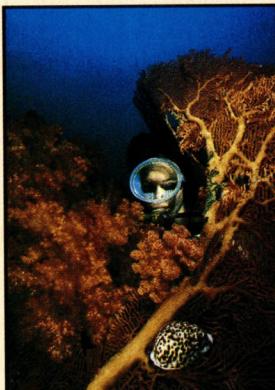
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Back on the boat as I described the dive, some of my shipmates laughed, others just shook their head. I was laughing by the time I put my camera in the rinse bucket, but when I looked down, my hands were shaking. The experience was both exhilarating and unnerving. The adrenaline was pumping full force from a dive that lasted only two minutes and twenty-one seconds. Diving in the Fiji Islands can be like that.

Prior to the next dive, first mate Sam Henning, my longtime Fijian friend, fired up the Zodiac. We headed for the only village on the island, perhaps the only village within a 50-mile radius. Upon our arrival, Sam greeted the island chief. They exchanged gifts and drank a few bowls of the ceremonial Fijian beverage called kava, while making some small talk and singing a few songs. Afterward, the chief gave us his blessings for safe diving upon "his" pristine reefs. Here was a place of dreams—an untouched coral wonderland—nature's most breathtaking realm.

The Fijian people residing on the island had absolutely no luxuries, and yet they had everything. They were sole owners of the reefs surrounding their home. They knew how to coexist within this fragile, complex ecosystem—never trying to dominate their environment, but instead attempting only to be a part of it.

There was harmony here, perhaps some island magic. You could feel it. As we cruised toward our dive site, a pod of dolphins joined us for the journey. The sea was like glass. A blue sky held a warm, tropical sun that sent streaming shafts of light onto the luxuriant, living, limestone carpet below. Finning down to the reef, I was greeted by several ornately designed schooling bannerfish. They posed for the camera in synchronized swimming fashion. Hundreds of orange lyretail basslets fluttered in the shallows, the sunlight making them glow against a cerulean backdrop. Table coral was the size of dinner tables. Fire engine red coral trout (grouper) with blue spots and emperor angelfish hovered beneath the giant coral formations while being cleaned by the omnipresent cleaner wrasses. Where hard corals would allow it, fields of soft corals covered the substrate in a riotous display of colors. On the deeper reef slope, gorgonian fans of golden yellow and scarlet red waved gloriously in the slight current. Tiny nudibranchs and exotic inch long gobies moved secretly among the living tapestry.

Out of film, out of precious bottom time and low on air, I began my ascent. It was a perfect day in a perfect world. No worries, mate. As I put my camera in the rinse bucket, I felt exhilarated, completely relaxed and possessed of an extraordinary inner peace. Diving in the Fiji Islands can be like that.

I have made 10 trips to the Fiji Islands during the past several years. Why Fiji again and again? There are so many other exotic destinations, why Fiji? In fact, I have visited many other destinations throughout the tropical Indo-Pacific, some on more than one occasion. Each destination certainly has its merits. But when I total the pluses, there always seems to be more of them in the Fiji column. Allow me to elaborate.

Easy Access

Fiji is a 12-hour flight from the West Coast. Flights are direct with a one-hour fuel stop in Hawaii. The west coast points of departure are Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Vancouver. The choice of airlines includes Qantas, Air New Zealand or Canadian Air. There are no transfers, no small, third-world airlines. It's simply a matter of boarding a major airline in the U.S. or Canada, and half a day later you're in Fiji . . . so is your luggage.

Hospitality

Fiji is one of the few exotic locations where you can find amenities such as reliable phone/fax service, drinkable water and rental cars. You can even be pampered in Fiji at some of the five-star hotels located on the main island of Viti Levu. While the luxury hotels offer diving, the surrounding reefs are impacted by fresh water run-off and over fishing. If you truly want to see the best that Fiji has to offer, travel to one of the remote offshore island groups for a stay at one of the private resorts or charter one of the live-aboards plying Fijian waters.

The people of Fiji are as wonderful as the diving. They go out of their way to make you feel at home. I sincerely believe that they enjoy the company of Americans. How many countries can you honestly say that about? Aside from the diving, it is this Fijian warmth and hospitality that keeps me coming back.

Law and Order

Last year one of my diving companions accidentally left his Aquatica Housing along with a Nikon F3 at the International Airport in Nadi, Fiji. He left it uncovered on the sidewalk near the taxi stand. We then drove to Suva (Fiji's capital) to board our dive vessel. When we arrived, my partner realized his worst nightmare had come true. His \$4,000 camera system was just sitting there on a sidewalk at an international airport.

At this juncture, it had been sitting there for close to four hours. We called a rental car service at the airport and asked them to go outside to look for the camera system. Unbelievably, both housing and camera were on the sidewalk exactly where he had left them! The moral of the story: Crime is one less thing you have to worry about in the Fiji Islands. Oh, by the way, a taxi driver delivered the camera

(Continued on page 61)



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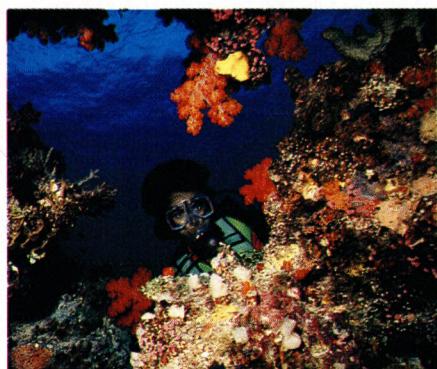
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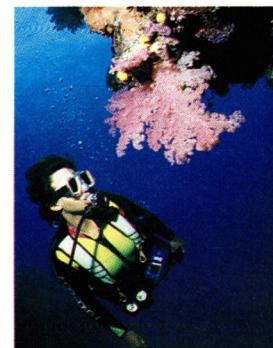


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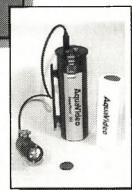
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NEW WAVES

Tube Top

Buoyancy control tubes are the latest endeavor to banish the weight belt forever. The new Attitude Adjuster consists of compact tubes aligned on either side of the air tank. Lead balls inside the tubes move freely for automatic repositioning and rapid weight adjustment. A quick-release mechanism provides emergency escape. Think Tank Products, Inc., will release the product in early 1993 through dive shops in Florida and Texas with a broader distribution to follow. For more information call (713) 933-9875.

Circle A on the Reader Service Card

Correct Change

TUSA has introduced two new lenses for divers who wear glasses or contacts. The Liberator Plus has all the functions of the popular Liberator and also allows for the easy installation of corrective lenses. It features quickly adjustable springless strap buckle, low volume for snug fit and double feather-edged crystal silicone skirt.

The Imprex Hyperform mask also incorporates the features of the Liberator with some improvements such as a bi-symmetric lens design that allows for interchangeable right and left lens installation. Its low volume offers increased peripheral vision. For more information call (213) 498-3708.

Circle B on the Reader Service Card

Inching Along

Lighting just got easier with the introduction of the new Caterpillar flex arm to the Marine Camera Distributors strobe system. Just like its namesake, the Caterpillar is made of segmented joints that flex in all directions for easy positioning of either strobe or video lights. A special friction clutch for the lamp head attachment simplifies head rotation. An accessory "Y" attachment provides the mounting of two lights on one arm. For more information call (619) 481-0604.

Circle C on the Reader Service Card

Photo Finish

Pictures tell the story on the new Computek II computer, which uses color-coded pictographic technology to give instant "snapshots" of vital data. Nitrogen level, remaining air, battery life and a safe-to-fly designation are all displayed in colorful graphic forms. Easy-to-read numeric displays keep you updated on depth, deco status, bottom time, temperature, tank pressure and other important figures. For more information call Ocean Edge at (619) 695-9130.

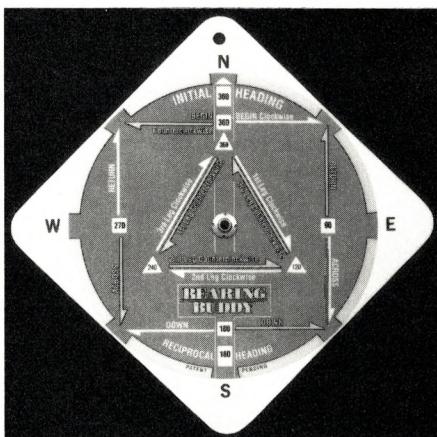
Circle D on the Reader Service Card

Mini Skin

This slinky, black, newest member of the Tank Skin family by Scuda is a universal holster for all brands of alternate air cylinders. Slip it over the tank and then mount on a BC chest or tank strap. A pair of snap hooks also lets you attach it to your BC or Tank Skin Rings. For more information call (800) 447-2832.

Circle E on the Reader Service Card

Less Math, More Fun



Simply dial it and run it! Instructors, students and navigational enthusiasts are enjoying less math and having more fun with the new Bearing Buddy. This user-friendly navigational aid and slate is designed to simplify calculations for underwater navigational patterns. It gives instantaneous headings for reciprocals, squares, triangles, U-patterns or established patterns of either clockwise or counterclockwise directions.

The plastic disk mounted on a six-inch

slate shows directional headings through its windows. You can draw patterns and write down the headings on the waterproof slate. To use, set your initial heading and follow either the clockwise arrows for right turns or the counterclockwise arrows for left turns. Your next headings will show up, in order, through the clear windows. For more information call the diver who invented it: Eric Richardson, (501) 862-0021.

Circle F on the Reader Service Card

In Living Color



A new mask by SeaVision promises to put the punch back into underwater sightseeing. The lens are made of a color-correcting material that intensifies the colors of the spectrum that are lost by the light-absorption properties of water. The lens are also supposed to increase clarity and depth perception.

SeaVision comes in a variety of rim colors and offers a low-volume, split-lens design with a gray silicone skirt that keeps your eyes focused on the subject. The lens are treated for scratch and fog resistance. Easy-to-install custom-prescription lenses are also available. Request the SeaVision video at your dive store or call (813) 866-0037 for more information.

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Slated for Action

Have you ever gone down with a hastily scribbled drawing of a wreck that made perfect sense while you were looking at a dive guide up on deck but turned into hieroglyphics under water? For travelers to Truk Lagoon, that doesn't have to be a problem anymore. K & S Enterprises has released a set of five Truk Lagoon Dive Guide Slates representing nine of Truk's most famous wrecks as well as a map of the entire lagoon. The heavy-duty slates measure seven by nine inches and contain wreck depths, lengths, points of interest, photographic highlights and relative positions to the ocean floor. For more information call (305) 441-9246.

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Oops...

In the September/October issue, *Gulf Stream Eagle* was omitted from the listing of live-aboard operators in the

Bahamas. For more information call (800) 488-3483. *Bottom Time Adventures'* West Coast phone number was listed incorrectly. The correct number is (800) 727-2822. Also the *Gulf Stream Princess* is now the *Palm Princess*.

In the Belize Dive Travel Information Chart on page 39, the winter temperature for Belize was incorrectly reported as 60°F. It should have read 75-80°F with lows rarely dipping below 60°F.

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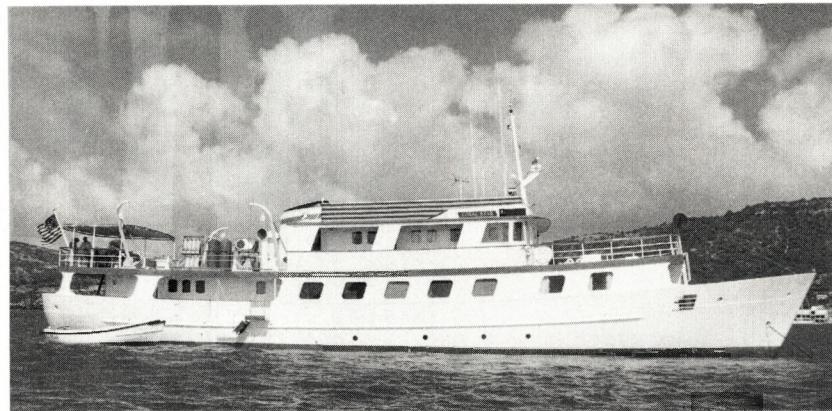
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LIVE-ABOARD UPDATE

Remote Possibilities



New boats on the horizon! That means more opportunities for divers to explore remote sites that were inaccessible not so long ago. It's also further proof that the live-aboard industry is a burgeoning success in the dive world. The Aggressor Fleet continues to multiply. The newest addition will be the *Palau Aggressor* scheduled to make its first cruise on January 24. The vessel will operate year round offering seven nights and five-and-a-half days of diving. For more information about any Aggressor boat call (800) 348-2628.

Speaking of firsts, See & Sea announces a new live-aboard in Borneo. Carl Roessler will escort the inaugural cruise March 2-12 on the 120-foot refitted coastal freighter that will accommodate 18 passengers. The name *Borneo Explorer* has been tentatively approved by the Malaysian government. The first cruises (March to October) will go beyond Sipadan to dive on a series of reefs north and south of Layang Layang. The marine life is so abundant, a recent expedition encountered more than 500 hammerheads at a single dive site. From November to February the vessel will operate on the eastern side of Borneo.

After the warm-water incursion of the El Nino weather pattern, observers report massive numbers of hammerheads, white tips and other pelagics thronging the waters around Cocos Island. Divers who have frequented Cocos for five years say this year's shark schools are the largest they have ever seen there. To take advantage of the sightings, See & Sea has arranged a Christmas big-animal spectacular December 17-27 and a New Year's spectacular December 30-January 9

aboard the *Undersea Hunter*.

The 120-foot *Falie* is host vessel for the 17th Annual See & Sea Great White Shark Expedition scheduled for February 1-12. The *Falie*'s three full-size shark cages have large viewing ports for filming these awesome predators. Some groups have been visited by as many as seven 15-footers at once, and every group has seen plenty enough to call it the thrill of a lifetime, according to Carl Roessler.

On its April 15-25 cruise in Vanuatu, the 130-foot *Coriolis* will make a special stop at Pentecost Island for passengers to watch or photograph the famed Land Divers there. A dozen or more men leap head first from tall towers. As they plummet toward the ground, their only hope of survival is that vines tied around their ankles will stop them before they crash to earth. These daring performers calculate their fall so precisely that their hair actually brushes the ground. Pentecost Island will be just one of the stops in the 700-mile itinerary of Vanuatu's spectacular diving. For information about any of the See & Sea trips call (800) DIV-XPRT.

What better way to develop a positive perspective on the new year than by diving with hundreds of humpbacks and listening to their eerie songs. For 1993 the *Coral Star* has expanded its annual whale watching trips on the Silverbank, south of the Turks and Caicos. The first expedition will take off January 23, and they will conclude with the last trip taking off March 20. Guests on the 1992 trips reported hundreds of the 60-foot creatures in sight from dawn to dark. It is estimated as many as 3,500 of the 50-ton whales congregate on the Silverbank each year during calving season. For more information call (800) 433-7262. ▀

(Continued from page 55)

and housing to our dive boat. For the three-hour delivery he charged my friend only \$30. Amazing, isn't it?

Resorts/Live-aboards

Fiji has become quite popular with American divers in the past several years. With numerous private island resorts only a 10-minute boat ride from world-class diving, it's easy to see why. There are also a couple of excellent live-aboards available to take divers to the more remote areas of Fiji such as Astrolabe Reef, the Lomativiti Island Group or the Lau Island Group. Detailed information is available through numerous U.S. dive tour operators or the Fiji Visitors Bureau in Los Angeles (213-417-2234).

The Diving

There are more than 300 islands in the Fiji archipelago. Those islands are scattered across 7,055 square miles of the blue South Pacific. There are thousands of miles of coral reefs. Many of these reefs have yet to be explored. It is diving on a colossal scale. What you can see under water in these islands will glow in your memory for a lifetime.

In one 14-day trip, I observed humpback whales, pilot whales, bottle-nosed dolphins, a whale shark, hammerheads, grey reef sharks, silver-tip whaler sharks, eagle rays, manta rays, hawksbill turtles, schools of mahi mahi and yellowfin tuna. That's right, one 14-day trip, not to mention the incredibly colorful reefs and exotic reef fishes!

Among Fiji's many attributes is its claim as the Soft Coral Capital of the World. If you get an opportunity to dive sites like Soft Coral Grotto in Bengga Lagoon, Yellow Wall at Kadavu Island, Magic Mountain at Namena Island, Great White Wall across from Taveuni, or Mariah's Cove at Matagi Island, you'll see why this title is well deserved. Dreamhouse or Bereqi Beach off of Savusavu are also popular spots. These breathtaking sites are merely to whet the appetite. Fiji is a kingdom of untold natural treasures. It is a land of friendly faces and faraway, secret places. It is the South Pacific paradise you dream about.

Recently we found ourselves on the aft deck of our chartered live-aboard watching the sunset at a remote, uninhabited island in the Northern Lau Group. "What do you suppose these reefs looked like two or three hundred years ago," pondered one of the guests? "You'll find out tomorrow," was the captain's reply. Diving in Fiji can be like that. ■

Greg Brown's Diving Guide to Fiji will be released by Pisces Books in 1993.

Thanks to Greg Lawlor for hospitality extended to the author while on location.



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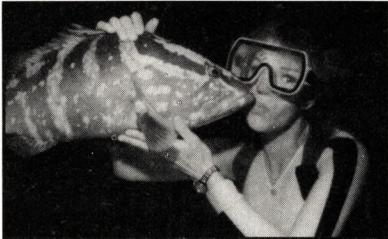
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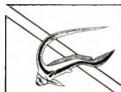


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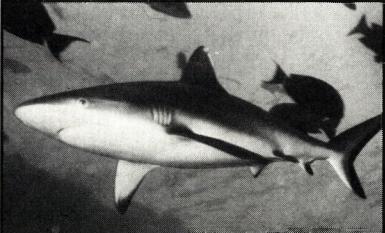
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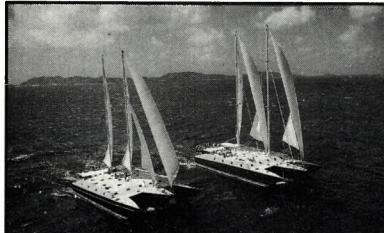
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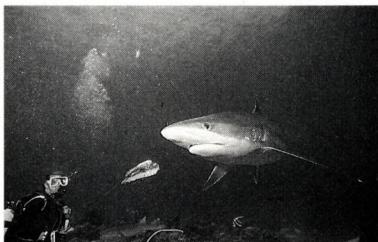
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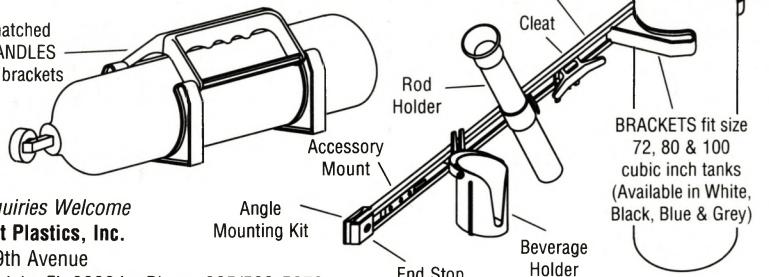
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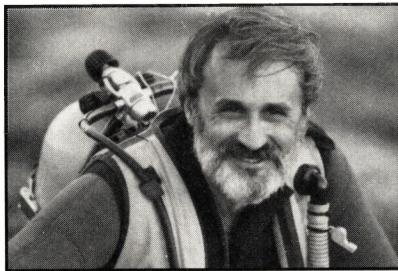
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Middletown, NY 10940
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Man and Moray

Eels are beautiful people, no matter where you encounter them. Except of course, in Hollywood. Hollywood eels eat divers. Remember the green plastic monster that obligingly eliminated the bad guy in *The Deep*? Let's face it. In terms of defining animal behavior, movies have a lot of audacity. Flesh and blood eels, even eight-foot morays, simply don't eat people.

front of the snout, and the other set above the eyes. Very strong muscles control the moray's lower jaw, and thus this animal is known for its tenacity in holding on to its prey.

Most eels, on first encounter, are shy. By day, they retreat into the corals, only their heads emerging, mouths opening and closing rhythmically to reveal rows of finely chiselled teeth. This is anything but a threatening gesture. The eel is simply breathing by "inhaling" water, passing it over its gills to remove oxygen. The water exits through two large holes located on either side of the head.

At the first sign of a diver, an eel will usually withdraw deeper into the reef. But other eels may stay put and even behave in a friendly manner, particularly those used to being fed by human visitors. Divers towing a speared fish behind them sometimes lose their catch to hungry eels.

from an eel, lest I arouse his basic fishy instinct to grab. Had I pushed my luck too far? Were my fingers about to be shredded? They did look a lot like the baitfish that Wilmer and friends so gladly accept as routine handouts!

I had, of course, underrated Wilmer's inherent wisdom (my fingers probably didn't smell right). He paused (I could almost hear him say, "Oops, pardon me!") and his jaws opened apologetically, having done no harm whatsoever. That day, my faith in the basic good intentions of morays was irrevocably confirmed.

The happiest moments of many divers' lives underwater are spent in these unique encounter sessions with morays. We touch, we pirouette. Man and moray are eye to eye. We speak a silent language. Here in the sunlit coral afternoon, entwined, we are a bizarre embrace between two worlds.



Left: Under strobe light the so-called green moray takes on a brownish cast, but as seen by the diver they are a bright green.



Right: Spots before your eyes when diving in shallow Caribbean water often means you are nose to nose with a spotted moray.



I've never met an eel I didn't like. There are two distinct personality types among these fascinating animals: eels are either quite shy or very friendly. The latter develop their ambience with humans over a period of time and a long list of free meals.

Morays inhabit all tropical oceans of the world. The Caribbean's most prominent eels, those most noticed by divers, are the spotted and green morays. The largest, the greens, may reach seven feet in length, while the spotted species measures less than four feet. Lacking scales, eel skin is thick and leathery, surprisingly silken to the touch.

Eels have two sets of nostrils: one set resembling tiny tubes protruding from the

But that's the natural law of the sea, if you're a reef creature, you get it where you can find it, and you don't say "Please."

Those who have consorted with morays will testify that these gentle monsters don't seem to have much appetite for human flesh. One day I had just finished feeding my friend Wilmer, and was stroking his face, which he seems to relish. Distracted by an inquisitive grouper, I glanced away for a mere second. When I turned back to Wilmer, I saw with some dismay that my fingers were inside his mouth and two rows of needle-sharp teeth were starting to close down.

I froze and braced myself. I'd been told never, never to jerk my hand away

What binds us? What draws you to me? Only the raw fish in the plastic bag? Or is there more? (Allow me my illusions, please.) I know well what draws me to you: a tantalizing glimpse of strange mysteries far beyond my grasp, for I am chained by my bubbles, forever, to the shore.

So I'll go on making friends with every eel I encounter, sneering behind my facemask at movie moguls hungry for box office hits so unfairly depicting my silken friends as fiends. And I'll grumble silently when asked: "Aren't you afraid of all those man-eaters living underwater?"

What I fear most is the ignorance that underlies the question. ■

—Nancy Sefton

A Bullhead Mystery

Fog drifted across the motionless water of Big Fish Lake, stealing its way through the branches of weeping willows along the shoreline. Huddled there silently under the trees, the divers waited for my signal to enter the water and begin the night dive.

"Kind of spooky out here in the dark," a voice said.

"Nah," I answered with typical instructor bravado. "Same old dive site we've all dove a hundred times. Just darker."

"Gives me the creeps," said the voice.

I peered at them, trying to identify the dissenter, but in rented wetsuits and hoods they all looked alike.

"Turn your lights on," I said, hoping that would reassure them. "Point 'em down so they don't shine in anyone's eyes."

A dozen beams of light cut into the fog, flashing up, down, around in circles and in my eyes.

"That's fine," I said. "Let's move to the water's edge. Stay with your buddies."

I went first, leading the way down a small embankment to the water. They followed. Their lights jiggling violently in the fog, like frightened fireflies.

This was their first night dive, and like mankind down through the ages, they feared the unknown. They feared the foggy dark night that shrouded the gay lights of lake homes and bustling resorts around the lake. They feared the blackness of the placid water and the mysteries which lay beneath it, waiting. Yet, cautiously, they followed me farther and farther into the water until we stood waist deep.

They formed a tight semi-circle around me. Silent.

"This is going to be fun," I promised the row of blank faces. "A great many



things come out at night that you never see during the day."

"Oh, choice," a voice responded.

"I didn't mean it that way," I said. "This lake is loaded with game fish. Northern, walleye, sunfish, bass and some carp that must go 20 pounds."

"Nice to know we're not alone out here," a woman said.

"Just remember the safety rules," I continued. "Stay with your buddy. Surface if separated. And set your compasses to 315 degrees, which will take you directly to the ferryboat at 22 feet. Everyone ready?"

I led them slowly above the weeds and beyond to the waiting depths. I knew the way, but paused repeatedly to consult my compass. I did this so the students could use me as an example for proper navigation. But they ignored me, preferring instead to shine their lights in each other's eyes, clear their masks, over-inflate their BCs or swim in circles.

Moving deeper, I welcomed the cool water into my wetsuit with a sense of relief. The shallows had been warmer than expected, and I was uncomfortable in the hooded suit.

On the faint luminous dial of my depth gauge, the needle edged past 20 feet, and I swept my light ahead to pick up the bow of the sunken ferryboat. The mixing of warm and cold water here at the thermocline gave the water an oily appearance. I was almost on top of the boat before I

saw it, and had to put out my hand to avoid a collision.

I drifted to the bottom and knelt there, careful not to stir up the fine silt that covered the rocks like dust. In the distance I could just make out the glow of many dive lights approaching slowly. It was an eerie sight, there alone.

But I wasn't alone. Something touched me, then wormed its way along my neck. A snake! But, of course, there are no water snakes in Minnesota. I froze. It moved down, along my shoulder. I gasped. It dug into my arm with a numbing pain. I jerked around to face my attacker, and looked into the mask of a terrified student. His hand dropped from my arm. The wild look in my eyes must have frightened him further, because he quickly backed off several feet. Then stopped, and held up his dead flashlight.

After that, I kept a close count and made sure none of them got behind me. When they had exhausted approximately half their air, we reversed our compass course and started back toward shore. The trip was uneventful, and I could tell from their expressions when we surfaced, that some were even enjoying themselves.

"Some of us have quite a bit of air left," one of them said. "Can we swim around here for awhile? Just in the shallows?"

"Sure," I said.

In a moment, I was alone again.

The air was cool and damp. I partially unzipped my wetsuit jacket and tucked my gloves inside. But once again I had the feeling of not being alone.

Something touched my ankle. There, at my feet, were several bullhead catfish, gumming their way around my ankles. Their mouths working against the rubber, like a sucking calf. Not painful, but not pleasant either.

Every living creature has its place in the grand ecological scheme, and the bullhead is no exception. But only God knows why they're so ugly. Unlike other fish, which are mostly tail and torso, the bullhead is mostly head. A head that is flat and wide, adorned with thick lips, long black whiskers and dull stupid eyes. Instead of scales, the bullhead has a tough hide with a yellow underbelly. While most fish swim gracefully, the bullhead moves through the water with a lethargic waddle.

I was in no danger. No jagged sharp teeth were piercing my wetsuit. Nevertheless, the sensation of their mouths

(Continued on page 78)

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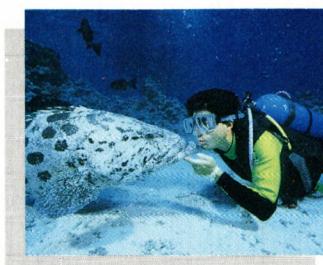
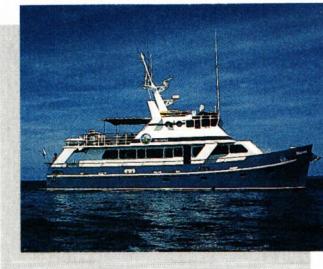
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FREE FLOWING

(Continued from page 76)

tirelessly working against my body touched some deep primal fear, and I could think of nothing but escape.

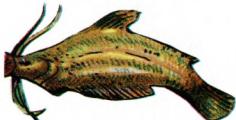
"They're everywhere, aren't they?" a voice said close to my ear.

I looked up to see one of the divers standing beside me.

"They're harmless," I said, as much to reassure myself as him.

"Let's get out of here," a woman begged. I could hear the panic in her voice.

We stood there in four feet of water watching as dozens of bullheads waddled around us unafraid, sucking at our limbs and anything else that dangled in the water.



Suddenly from the corner of my eye, I caught a flash of steel. In one decisive stroke like a guillotine the blade cut through the air and crashed into the water. An instant later a bullhead lost his head. Too stupid to know what had befallen him, the head swam lazily away without the body, dragging an assortment of bloody entrails.

Several of the more squeamish divers gasped, then someone shouted, "Look! They're gone!"

Only the fog remained, creeping across the water as before and coating us with a chill mist. I listened to an unseen wind moaning across the dark sky.

"Let's pack up," I said. "And don't forget to wash off your equipment before you store it in the truck."

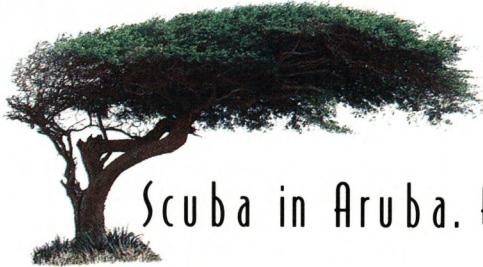
No one complained, and within minutes we were all stripped to our bathing suits and back in the water rinsing the equipment. It was then that it happened.

"Look there," a man pointed.

The severed head came swimming as before, searching for its body. The eyes were open, unblinking, and it moved with the same waddle as if its tiny brain had yet to realize there were no fins or tail to propel it.

We reached dry land in less than a heartbeat. Fully dressed, I stood at the water's edge staring out into the gray mist. No doubt some unknown current had carried the head along. I turned up the collar on my windbreaker. Not a ripple could be seen on the dark water. I chuckled to myself. How foolish we are sometimes when we let our imaginations overcome our good judgement. ■

—James Olsen



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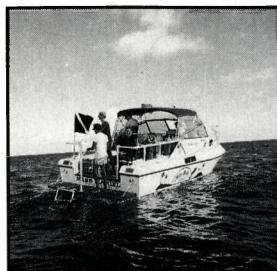
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DIVERSSIONS

(Continued from page 34)

MAKE WAY FOR BEQUIA

Bequia's (pronounced Bek-way) new airport opened this year at a cost of over 25 million US dollars. It took two years to complete, being virtually constructed out of the sea. The 3,600-foot runway provides lighted access for private and chartered aircraft. Service by Liat and Air Mustique is available from St. Vincent, Barbados and St. Lucia, all less than 30 minutes flight time away. Previously the island could be reached only by private boat or ferry from St. Vincent, nine miles to the north. Bequia is quiet, peaceful and non-commercialized with some of the Caribbean's finest diving.

In anticipation of more dive travelers finding this gem of an island, Dive Bequia has added a third dive boat to their fleet. The 32-foot vessel is equipped with everything 20 divers need for a day trip to the sites surrounding Bequia. For more information call (800) 851-DIVE.

BATTLING FOR BUSINESS

It wasn't so long ago that divers got only a blank stare from insurance companies when seeking a policy to cover the misadventures of a dive gone wrong. Today, it's a buyer's market as insurers battle for dive business. Divers Alert Network (DAN) offered the original diver's insurance. Now other dive organizations and regular insurance companies are offering policies for divers. PADI has just entered the market by sponsoring a dive accident policy for its students and certified divers. The PADI-sponsored policy was planned in cooperation with DAN so that DAN will benefit financially from the sales. For more information call Vicencia and Buckley Insurance Services at (800) 223-9998.

Divers Security Insurance of Boulder, Colorado has been offering policies for scuba enthusiasts since 1987. Although it has covered divers for as many years as DAN, the private company is not associated with any dive organization. Five areas of coverage can be mixed and matched to customize a policy to suit the clients activity level. The options include decompression-related injuries; non-decompression-related injuries such as ear problems, broken bones and bites related to either diving or snorkeling accidents; air ambulance and injuries from other recreational water sports or boating activities. There's also a life insurance policy for any covered injury. For more information call (800) 288-4810.

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TWO NEW FROM DAN

DAN's training department has produced an oxygen first aid educational video to accompany their oxygen provider and oxygen instructor courses. It highlights the basics of early dive accident recognition and emergency administration for injured divers. The video should not be substituted for actual training.

A mini oxygen unit is being introduced as a smaller, more portable system than the standard DAN Oxygen Unit. It includes all the same components except the jumbo D cylinder. Divers will need to make arrangements to have an oxygen cylinder at the dive site. The unit includes a multi-function regulator, demand inhalator valve with mask, pocket mask, non-rebreather mask and tubing, valve wrench/hand wheel and waterproof case. For more information contact DAN at (919) 684-2948, ext. 555.

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Where Oceans Collide

Tierra del Fuego, the island at the southern tip of South America, is "Terra Incognito" on the world map of dive travel, nevertheless it offers great diving. Located at a latitude of 55 degrees south and only 700 miles from Antarctica, its chilly shores serve as the staging ground for many expeditions to the frozen continent, but only a handful of people dive here.

It is here at Cape Horn that the Pacific and Atlantic clash. Here the towering seas and relentlessly unpredictable weather have demanded respect, and often the lives, of sailors ever since Magellan discovered the area in 1520. Yet despite the area's well-deserved reputation for adverse climate, the archipelago often enjoys periods of calm during which its fascinating underwater terrain can be explored.

While the bonfire-making Indians who gave Tierra del Fuego or Fireland its name have long since disappeared, the sparsely populated island still very much remains a frontier. The northern lowlands border on the Strait of Magellan, which separates the island from the mainland,

and are used for shepherding. In the south, glacier-harboring mountains rise to more than 8,000 feet.

Here at the shore of the Beagle Channel, the island's largest town, Ushuaia, is situated on Argentinean territory (western Tierra del Fuego belongs to Chile). For reasons of both geography and logistics, Ushuaia is a logical base for a dive trip to the area. Ushuaia also is the home port of the *Tres Maria*, a 35-foot fishing vessel owned by Hector Monsalve. Hector, a diver with more than 20 years experience, served as a guide for the Cousteau team when they explored Cape Horn waters in 1986. His underwater photos of the area have been published in several South American magazines. Hector offers his boat for charter to divers who visit Ushuaia—about 15 of them per year. I took Hector up on his offer when I visited Tierra del Fuego in late March, a few days into the southern fall.

As we left port in the early morning, the sun was shining and the Beagle Channel was as flat as a mirror. My excitement about being able to log a dive in this remote place was heightened when Hector displayed the scuba equipment I was to use. While his only rental wetsuit happened to be near my size and in reasonable condition despite its advanced age, the fun started with the BC—there was none. A simple rope attached to the

72-cubic-foot steel tank would serve as a backpack. My tendency to regard such items as necessary was thoroughly shattered when it came to the octopus and gauges. Once more they were nonexistent. The inquiry as to how the heck, without a gauge, I was supposed to know when I was out of air, produced an astonished smile and an obvious suggestion from Hector: if I could no longer breathe, I could safely assume that my air supply was used up. No doubt, I was headed for a true frontier dive experience.

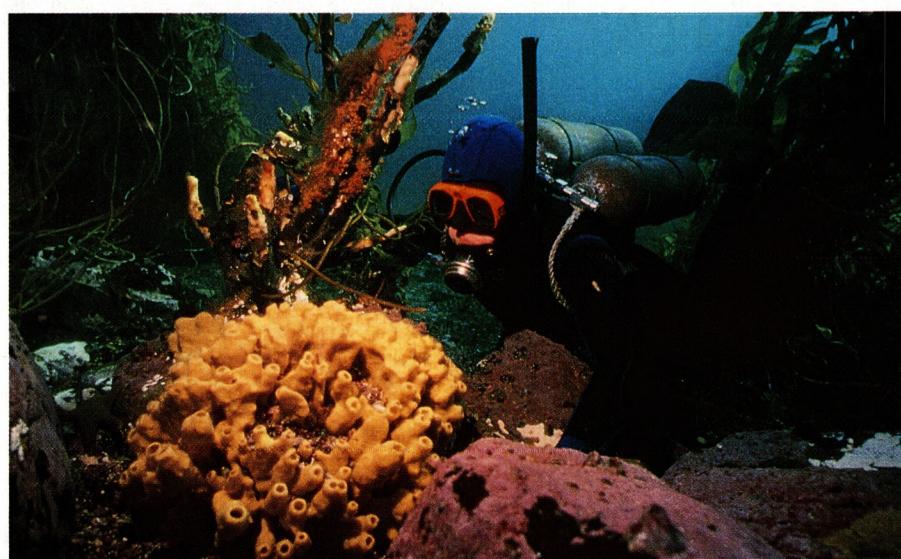
While the Beagle Channel does hold numerous wrecks, we decided to dive some of the massive kelp beds at 30 to 40 feet for a good look at the marine life. Entering the 41-degree water and descending to the shell-littered sea floor, I noticed many shells scurrying for cover. They were homes for hermit crabs. Sea urchins and anemones were joined by sea stars and nudibranchs, all creatures familiar to a West Coast diver. Even though I didn't spot any fish, invertebrates and crustaceans were abundant. Gliding through the 40-foot visibility, I spied more exotic creatures. A patch of large yellow tube sponges sprouted from a rock. Krill twitched its way through the water. Close inspection of the kelp revealed a white spider crab clinging to a leaf with its spindly legs. Other creatures I simply could not identify. After a fascinating 45 minutes, breathing became difficult, indicating the end of my air supply.

After the dive, Hector prepared a meal of freshly caught king crab and some superb Argentinean steak. On the second dive at a different site, I once more enjoyed an abundance of marine life with no other divers within hundreds of miles to disturb the solitude of this great experience. □

—Marco Flagg



Photos by Hector Monsalve



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